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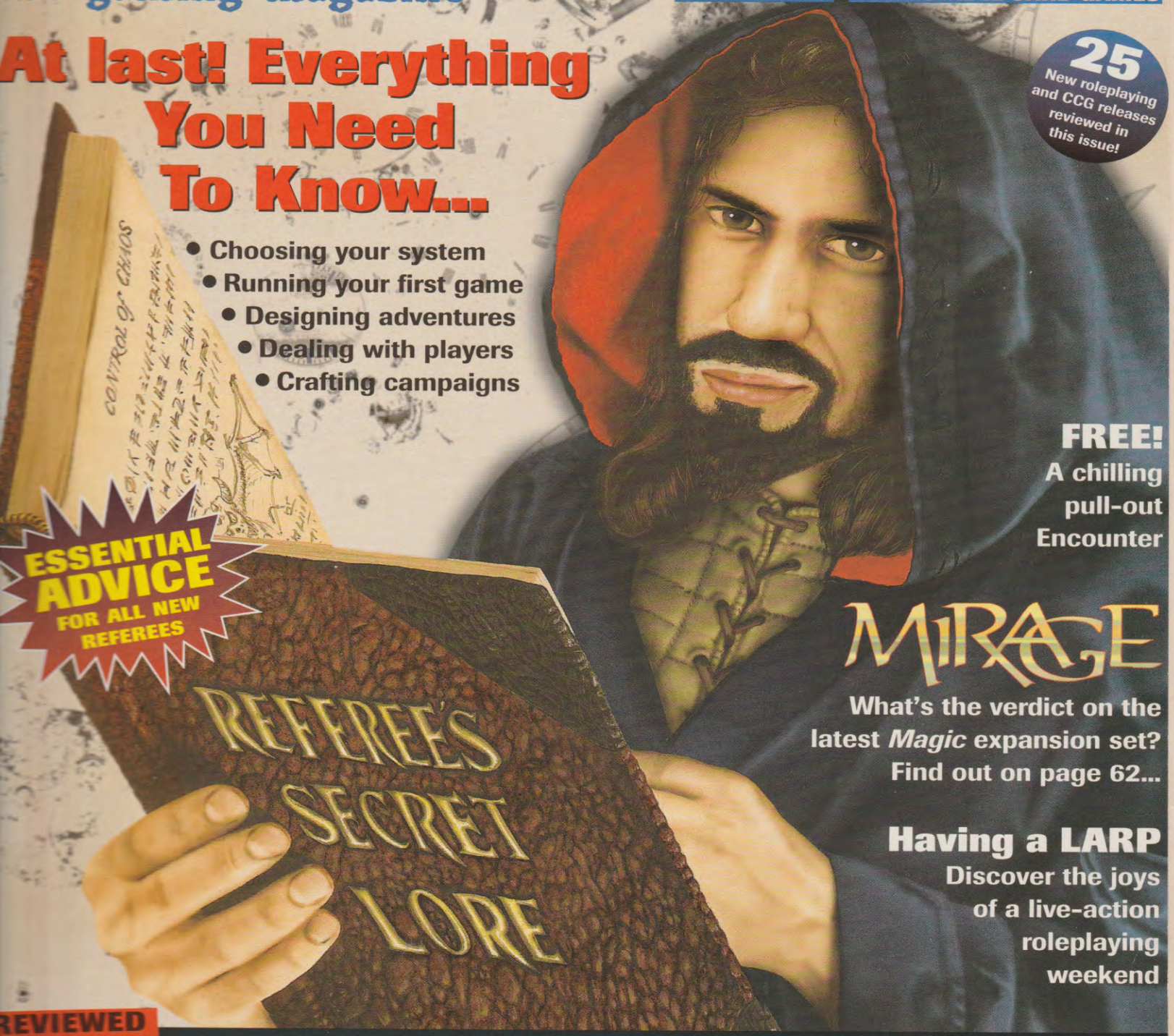

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MIRAGE
What's the verdict on the latest *Magic* expansion set? Find out on page 62...

Having a LARP
Discover the joys of a live-action roleplaying weekend

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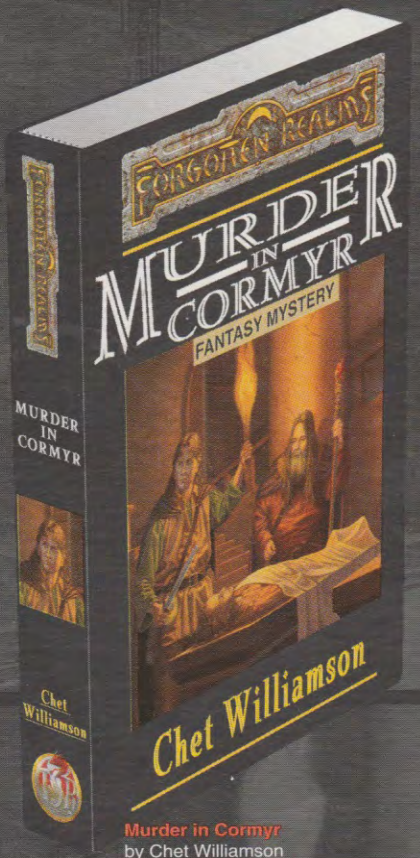

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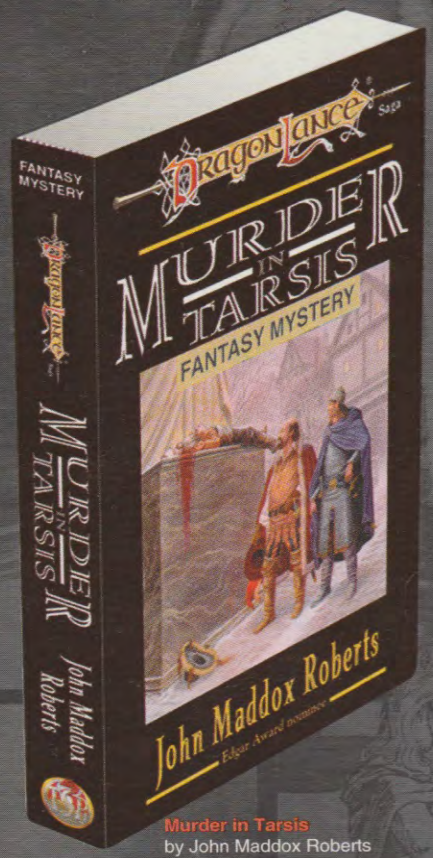

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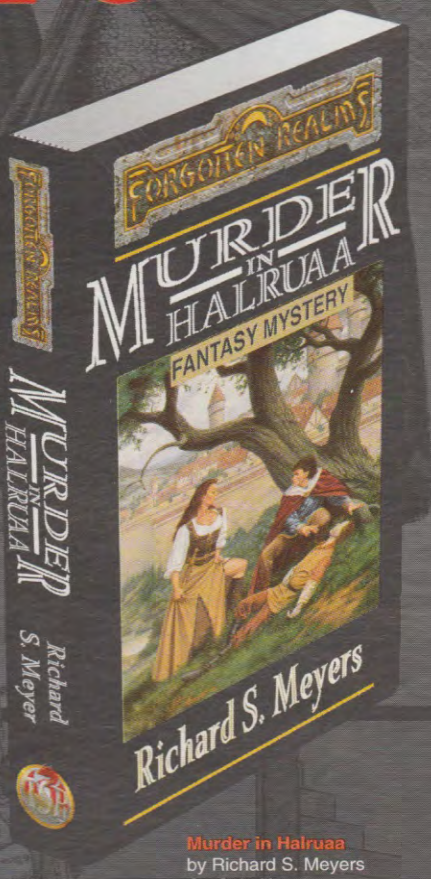

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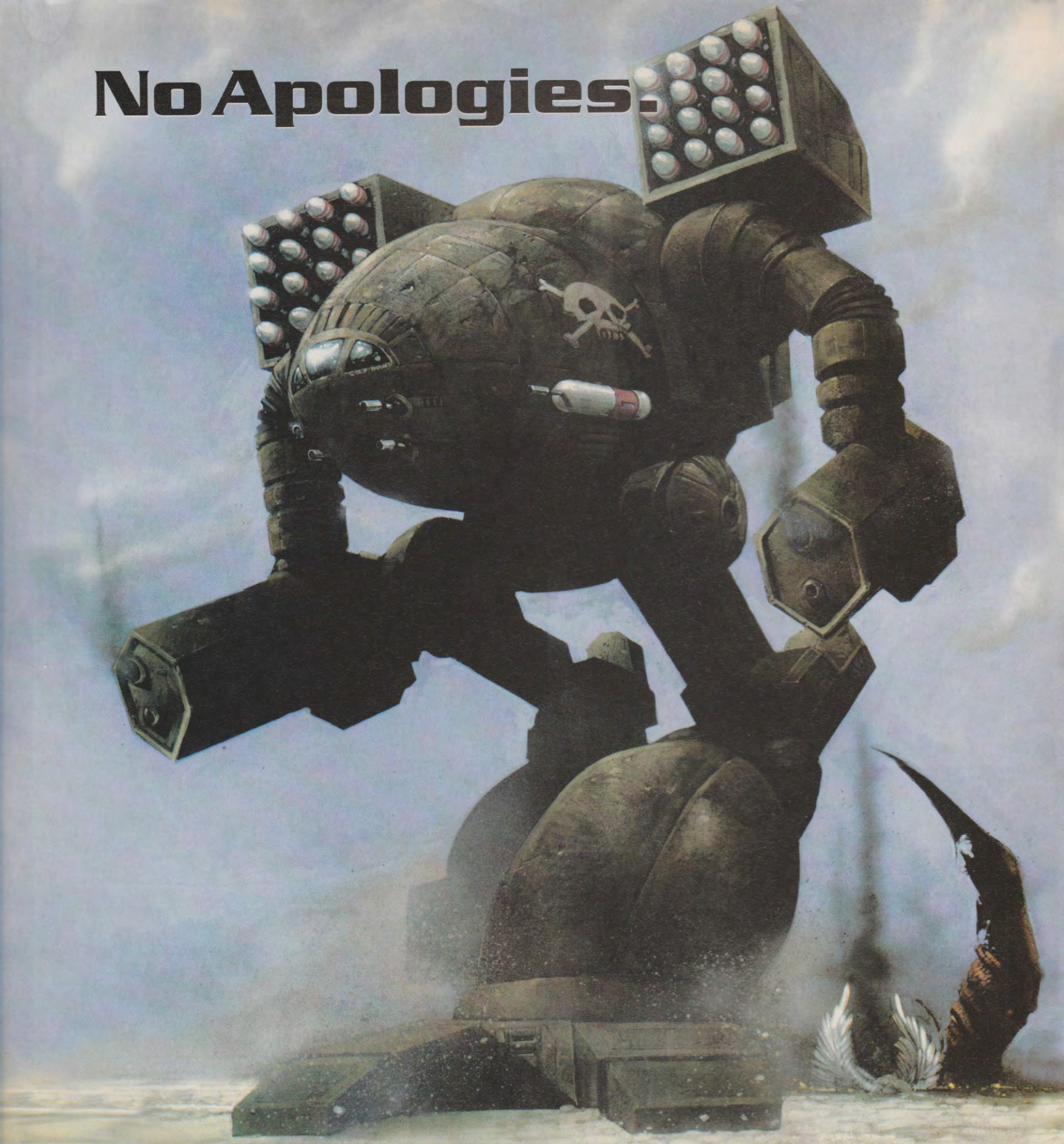

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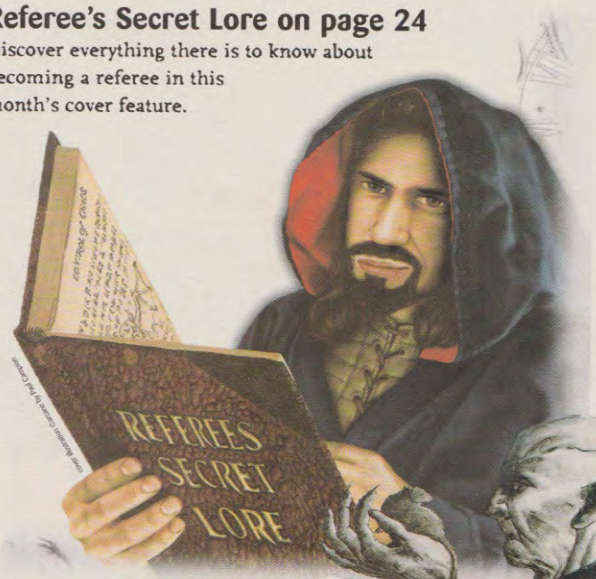

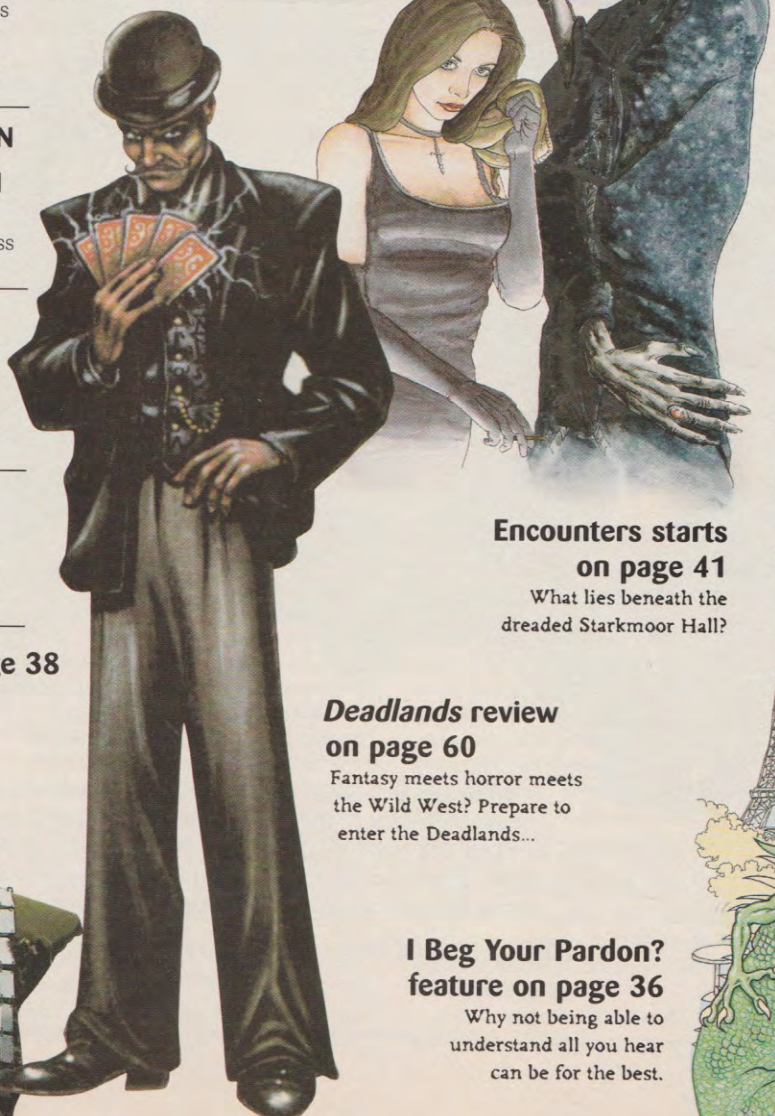

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This issue would have been impossible without... **a lot of luck**
This issue would have been a lot easier without... **moving offices**

Up Front

At a guess, I'd say it was about 12 years ago when I ran my first *D&D* session. Yeah, I'd been playing plenty before that – a good year, possibly more – but it took quite a lot of bottle to decide to take the plunge and become a referee. I suffered all the usual anxieties to begin with: were the players going to enjoy the scenario? (And bearing in mind the first adventure I ran was the one in the back of the DM's book in the red *Basic D&D* box set, this was pretty unlikely.) Was I going to be able to remember everything I needed to know? Would the players want to come back and play again the following week? And were they going to live up to *my* expectations? The more I pondered my decision to become a referee the more anxious I became, although there was really no need to worry.

That first afternoon after school will live with me forever – the clichéd manner in which the team came together (which I actually emulated in a new *AD&D* campaign I started a couple of months ago, just for old time's sake), the way the party stumbled blindly into rooms full of 'garbage' and the odd kobold, and the way that their faces lit up when at the end of the day they'd got out alive and had bounty to prove their courage. I'm positive that every veteran referee has similar memories – ones that you wouldn't give up for anything.

Not all players of roleplaying systems go on to become referees, which is a shame, because there's even more satisfaction to be had in DMing a *D&D* session, or being the Keeper in a *Call of Cthulhu* campaign, or otherwise running your chosen system than only ever playing in it. The proof, as they say, is in the tasting, which is why you should give it a go, and that's exactly what we intend to encourage in this issue of **arcane**. Steve Faragher, ex-editor of the mag and seasoned referee, has written a massive feature which is aimed directly at first-time refs, and those players out there who have occasionally thought about giving refereeing a go, but who have shied away from it because the prospect initially seems so daunting.

Which game is right for you, and which are good for first-time referees? How should you prepare for that very first session? How do you deal with players when they get awkward? All this and a whole lot more is divulged on page 24 and beyond.

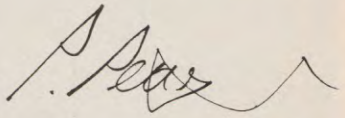
Whoops, I quite forgot what I was going to write next. That'll be short-term memory loss for you (can't think what's brought that on), though I do have a vague recollection that on page 32 you'll find a feature which looks at the notion of memory loss as the premise for an adventure. If you think of *Total Recall*, and the fun and games Arnie had as a result of forgetting who he was and what his role in life was, then you'll have a pretty good idea of what we're getting at. We touch on dreams too – for the stuff of nightmares can also be the stuff of which great scenarios are made...

Also this month we take a proper look at live-action roleplaying. LARP, as its known, has taken a bit of a knocking through the years, regarded by all-too-many tabletop roleplayers as a jumped-up version of cowboys and Indians. The costumes, the latex weaponry and the field-bound tomfoolery has done little to dispel this image, but I hope that by the time you've finished reading our 'I was a Live-Action Roleplaying Virgin' feature (page 38), you will have been persuaded that LARP is, in fact, jolly good fun. I admit I've never given it a go, but after reading Simon Cooke's feature, I'm sorely tempted.

Andy's been getting rather excited this month, bubbling over with enthusiasm for the new *Deadlands* RPG from Pinnacle Entertainment. If I were to say that it's a Wild West game with some very sinister overtones, I'd be telling you as much as I know, and indeed as much as I want to know, because Andy intends to start running a fully-fledged campaign pretty soon, and keeping the background information secret from the players is a vital element of the system. Could this be the game that knocks the mighty *Feng Shui* from the top of Andy's refereeing efforts? Could be. Read his massive, four-page review starting on page 60.

And then there's *Magic*. Yes, there's yet another expansion set out this month for the unstoppable card game. *Mirage* is its name (we gave you three free cards from the set a couple of issues ago), and it has to be said that it's rather good as I testify on page 64.

This issue of **arcane** has undergone a redesign, which has resulted in you getting more words for your money (about an extra 15,000, the equivalent of an extra 18 or so pages), without, I hope, sacrificing the artistic quality of the mag. I want to know what you think of the new look, so write to Paul Pettengale, **arcane**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

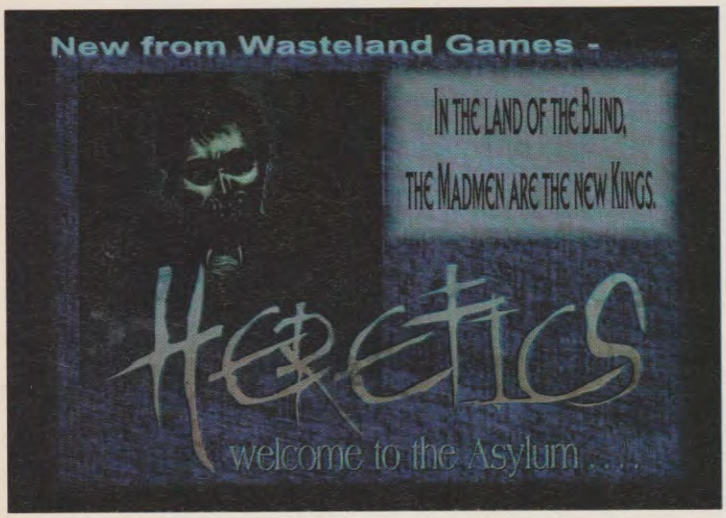


Paul Pettengale, Editor

"There's even more satisfaction to be had in running your chosen system than only ever playing in it."

NEWS

News from around the gaming industry brought to you by **arcane** every month.



Heretics will be reviewed in the next issue of arcane, check it out on Friday 29th November.

Not a pretty face, but then, this isn't a pretty game, is it?

Heretics

The Irish, it would appear, have warped imaginations, as Wasteland Games demonstrates with its next release for *Stocs Lite*...

COMING SOON

Stocs Lite, the game for which *Heretics* is designed for use with, was reviewed in **arcane** 2. Turn to page 53 if you missed it.

After some length of time with no releases, the Irish outfit Wasteland Games is set to launch an all-new sourcebook for the *Stocs Lite* system (**arcane** 2). *Heretics* is, to say the very least, rather strange, being a mix or modern-day horror and psychological thriller. We spoke to Eoin Connolly, who is the designer of the project, and started by asking him exactly what *Heretics* entails...

"There are creatures called the Hidden who move among us, perching on our dinner table as we have dinner and crawling across our ceiling as we sleep in our beds. Some are no bigger than maggots, other resemble skinned dogs and roam the streets at night in packs. The most dangerous ones look like people, although some manage it better than others. These are the ones that follow us home, that stare at us in the street and wait for a reaction. They sit next to us on buses and grind their teeth next to our ears, spitting obscenities at all within earshot. But most of us never notice them. Because they're not Real.

"The world of *Heretics* is split into three types of people, Believers, Unbelievers and the Heretics. Unbelievers are those that refuse to acknowledge the existence of anything supernatural or bizarre. Believers are people sensitive to the unnatural. They are the ones who think that a room is cold because there is a ghost in the house. They can feel emotions in sites where acts of violence have been perpetrated. They can sense the presence of the Hidden but they can only see flickers of them, out of the corner of their eye at best. The Heretics are the last type. To them the Hidden are as real as the rest of the world. They see them every day, the grubs on our ceilings that drop to feed on our dreams as we sleep, the nestlings that live in the sewers and dark places. They can see the packs of Kanid roaming the streets at night looking for a lone human, preferably a Believer, to attack and devour. The Heretics see the world for what it really is. And this has driven them irrevocably insane.

"The Heretics see the world for what it is. And this has driven them insane."

"The insanity that affects each and every Heretic is not your normal psychosis or mental abnormality. Each Heretic has a different world-view which, to them, is perfectly rational. James Bishop's Insanity, for example, is that he *can* recreate his dead family from pieces of metal and meat. And because he believes that it's possible, it becomes so. Of course, Insanities are always negative in nature and James is forced to destroy his aberrant creations again and again. He spends his entire life killing mockeries of the people he loves.

"Heretics live in a world where anything can happen and nothing can be taken at face value. They have no control over their Insanities and other Heretics also live within the Insanities. There is no question of a Heretic refusing to believe in something that can't possibly exist. If a Heretic believes, it *does* exist for all Heretics experiencing the Insanity, and refusing to believe will not make it simply go away. If you believe that the Cutting Men are chasing you, hiding scared under the sheets won't protect you from the scissors.

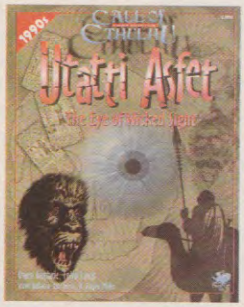
"Of course, Insanities are not 'live' all the time. For young Heretics, the Insanities might only hit them once a week. For the rest of the time they live in the Real world (same as ours, but they see all of it). As Heretics get older, their Insanities get stronger and stronger until eventually it consumes them and they cease to exist in the real world. They spend the rest of their lives living entirely in the Insanity. As Heretics live until they are killed and their essential organs consumed, the rest of their lives can be an extremely long time…

The game has taken over two years to bring together and is one of the strangest games that anyone's likely to play. Despite its more disturbing elements (it has overtones of cannibalism and body-mutilation) the characters inside the game are the good guys. Most are just normal people who have had this curse thrust upon them and are working out ways to cope with their new lives and abilities. The nature of the game means that the characters live on the edge of society. They know that they are the only thing stopping the Hidden from turning the world into an abattoir."

Yes, strange indeed. This 48-page sourcebook is to cost just £5.99 as it be launched at Gaelcon. **arcane** will bring you a full review in our next issue.

Chaosium in launch frenzy

New releases for *Call of Cthulhu* rush towards us as we approach the festive season.



Keepers for the unstoppable *Call of Cthulhu* system will have their work most certainly cut out for them between now and Christmas, because Chaosium has sourcebooks and scenario sets galore waiting to unearth themselves and crawl into the lives of investigators the world over. Next month we'll be reviewing *Horror's Heart* – a short 1920s campaign set in Montreal, Canada, where the investigators get the chance to delve into the dealings of a cult that thrives in Quebec. Complete with no less than 20 hand-outs and almost as many murders, this collection of short incidents should certainly fill a good few evening's play.

Utatti Asfet, on the other hand, is a much longer affair, set in the modern day, on the Pacific island nation of Tonga. The investigators are attending the International Symposium of Unexplained Phenomena, and, as one would expect, things start to get more than a bit strange. This 156-page book should provide enough material for months of play.

In November Chaosium will finally be releasing *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep*, a campaign of truly mammoth proportions which takes the investigators to New York, Cairo, Nairobi, Shanghai and Australia. The campaign was, as all long-standing *Call of Cthulhu* fans will undoubtedly know, launched back in the 1980s and was quickly dubbed as the best collection of its kind. However, that original release was somewhat incomplete – the final, Australian chapter didn't appear until the production of *Terror Australis*, the Australian *Call of Cthulhu* sourcepack which has long been unavailable. This new version, which has been revised and expanded, thankfully contains the missing Australian adventure, together with four entirely new encounters to boot. But there's even more from Chaosium…

Following *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep* comes *The Compact Trail of Tsathoggua*, a short 1920s campaign which is to be set in the Wilds of Canada and Greenland. And then, next year Chaosium will be releasing *Cthulhu Live*, a rules set for live-action *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying, and after that an all-new edition of the highly respected *Dreamlands* sourcebook. These latter two releases will be with us in February (so you can expect to see reviews in **arcane** 17, Great Ones permitting).

And besides...

Magic in Smiths

Who would have thought it, eh? These card games and funny roleplaying game things are supposed to be a bit weird, aren't they? Played by social misfits with tons of imagination and absolutely zero street cred. And yet you can now get hold of a couple of decks of *Magic* when you buy your copy of the *FT* in the morning! Because finally, Wizards of the Coast has managed to break into the mainstream by getting none other than high-street newsagent WH Smith to stock the most famous collectable card game in the world.

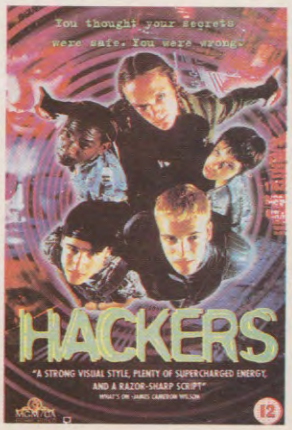
Smithies have agreed to stock *4th Edition* to start off with, with a view to expanding the range to expansion sets if the cards sell well enough. Here at **arcane** we're wondering what the next unlikely venture will be. *Call of Cthulhu* in The Body Shop? Maybe not.

Brewing up some broo

RuneQuest is still a dormant system, but that's not to say that people aren't out there producing source material for the game. Tom Zunder has teamed up with the German *RuneQuest* fanzine *FREE INT* to compile an A4 collection of fine Gloranthan lore which he's offering to anyone in the UK for a mere £4 (£5 outside of Britain). The Tradetalk: Broos in the East collection includes a Gloranthan calender, details on Gloranthan spirits, a couple of scenarios and more besides – it's a veritable bargain for the asking price. Send cheques to: Tom Zunder, 3 Stotfield Avenue, Lyppard Kettleby, Worcester WR4 0JJ. Or e-mail: troll@nochet.demon.co.uk

Hack and be damned

Now you can watch *Hackers* in the comfort of your home.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HACKERS
"A STRONG VISUAL STYLE, PLENTY OF SUPERCHARGED ENERGY, AND A RAZOR-SHARP SCRIPT"
12

November 22nd sees the release on video of the acclaimed *Hackers*, a tale of computer espionage and general modem-inspired tomfoolery which brings down Wall Street and makes life very hard indeed for a bunch of talented twentysomethings. The stars of the show get wrapped up in all manner of problems involving a vicious corporate war which somehow has them in the frame for a computer crime which they didn't commit. At least, they don't think they did. Confused? Well, run down to your local video store and rent a copy as soon as you're able, and all will become clear.

One minute you're playing *Doom* and the next you've crashed Wall Street...

...that'll teach you to play with computers.

Famous for 15 minutes

Continuing the theme of last month's 15 minutes, Stephanie Courage, our girl in Middlesex (or one of them anyway), draws our attention to the appearance of roleplaying in a couple of dodgy-sounding films we've never heard of.

Stephanie tells us of an early Henry Thomas (Elliot from *ET*) outing – a kiddies' flick suspiciously entitled *Cloak & Dagger*, in which *AD&D* and the original *Traveller* rulebooks are often seen upstaging the main character, Davey, who himself spends most of the time in a games shop.

But, as if Stephanie's cinematic knowledge knew no bounds, she also alludes to *Shakma* – a film starring Christopher Atkins *(Blue Lagoon, Dallas)*. Here, some unfortunate youths stay behind late at school for a LARP game their teacher has devised. It all goes horribly wrong when they are systematically murdered by the school baboon in a 'Jason out of *Friday 13th*'-style blind orgy of vicious blood-letting.

(Apparently – and you need to know this – the pink-arsed monkey had escaped from the school's biology lab where, as part of a dreadfully contrived *deus ex machina* plot swing, it had been held captive for the dubious purposes of highly unethical experimentation.)

We at **arcane** are not sure whether we believe all this, but what the hell – it's a good story. Good enough for an **arcane** T-shirt, anyway. And, even as you read this, we are eagerly anticipating the arrival of yet more **arcane** T-shirts. To earn one, seek examples of gaming that have found fame through media exposure and send your reports to us at:

15 Minutes, arcane, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW

Or e-mail us at:

arcane@futurenet.co.uk

because we've got an item of casual wear that's just 'you', darling. Really, it is.

Inferno: Battles of the Abyss

Tabletop battles in the Underworld.

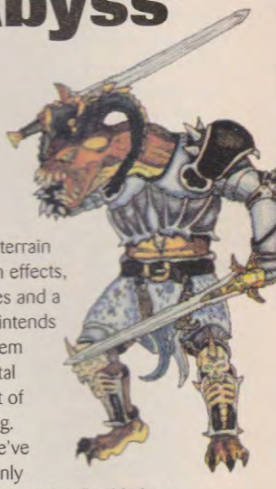
New from Canadian games company Global Games comes *Inferno*, a tabletop miniature system set in a Hell based on Dante's *Inferno*. Players take on the roles of generals in service to one of the seven Lords of the Abyss, and pit forces of demons against each other in vicious battles for supremacy.

Perhaps best described as *'BattleTech* goes to Hell', *Inferno* features a variety of forces from massive Archfiends standing nearly a 100' tall to hosts of human-sized undead. Included are rules for magical and mental attacks (as well as the more traditional option of hitting things with huge swords, axes and maces or simply gouging great chunks out of your foes with claws and teeth), hellish terrain such as lava pits and screamer vines, and a book containing detailed backgrounds for all the various Lords.

As you can see, the forces available to you vary from the grotesque to the very nasty indeed. Bear in mind that these guys are 60' tall.

The basic boxed set contains everything you need to play the game, with two map boards, cardboard representations of the various forces, terrain and special weapon effects, the rules themselves and a set of dice. Global intends to support the system with a range of metal miniatures, the first of which look stunning.

Global Games is already planning a roleplaying game based on the same background as *Inferno*, which is due for release next summer.



From what we've seen *Inferno* certainly looks like a lot of fun, with a flexible but easy to learn rules system and some very neat touches – Archfiends, for example, can heal themselves by eating friendly or enemy hosts. Look out for a full review of the game in the next issue of **arcane**.

R. Talsorian on release marathon

Bubblegum Crisis looms, together with a host of other new supplements...

The home of high-grade hit roleplaying systems such as *Cyberpunk 2020, Mekton Zeta* and *Castle Falkenstein* is gearing up for a bonanza of new releases in the coming months, mixing new lines and new products with a barrage of supplements for its existing systems. Most eagerly awaited by all those Japanese animé fans out there is *Bubblegum Crisis*, a new roleplaying game which adapts the glossy cyberpunk future of the cartoon series with R. Talsorian's characteristic flair – Benjamin Wright, who's working on the project, comments: "The game will make other *Crisis* material obsolete," and our initial glance at an early version would suggest that he's absolutely right. Benjamin promises plenty in the way of support for the game in 1997, with a possible four supplements projected.

For the long-established *Cyberpunk* system, the company is shortly to release a two-part series by the name of *Firestorm*, which details the fourth corporate war. The first installment, entitled *Stormfront*, will be available in November, with the second, *Shockwave*, following sometime in the new year. Nautical fans should also note that the *Firestorm* series will carry rules for undersea adventure.

Brainwave Blowout, which is also due in November, compiles all the netrunner hardware ever detailed for *Cyberpunk* into one tome, with the addition of rules and stats for all of the hardware detailed in the *Netrunner* collectable card game.

Cybergeneration, after slightly disappointing results in the sales department following its launch early this year, will continue with the release of *Generation Gap* before being placed "on hiatus" for the foreseeable future. The new version of *Cyberpunk (3rd Edition)* is still planned however, with work continuing apace. It promises to feature changes in combat, characters and netrunning, and introduces new Fuzion rules (also to be used in *Bubblegum Crisis* and the forthcoming *Champions: New Millenium*/Hero Games co-production).

Mekton Zeta fans will be catered for with the *Starblade Battalion* series, comprising six *Mecha Manuals* and three scenario books, together with a planned Nintendo 64 tie-in game.

And finally, *Castle Falkenstein's* next release will be *The Diaries of Auberon The Faerie: The Book of the Fey*, and expect to see RTG producing its own miniatures and resin kits soon too.

Babylon Project delayed

Artwork causes hold-up for the *Babylon 5* RPG.

Chameleon Eclectic and Wireframe Productions have announced that *The Babylon Project*, the eagerly awaited roleplaying game based on the *Babylon 5* TV show, will be released later than planned. The game will now be published on 26th November, just over a month later than originally thought.

According to the two companies, the delay is mainly down to artwork. "As we've gotten into final layout, we've decided to use more original artwork than we had previously planned," said Charles Ryan, president of Chameleon Eclectic. "In addition, our plans to have a really cool computer-rendered cover, produced by the company that does the visual effects for the show, suffered a minor setback when Babylonian Productions changed effects companies. None of these issues are that big a deal, but they do slow things down a bit."

Gamers can still look forward to playing one of these strange aliens – just a little bit later than planned...

Us disappointed gamers should console ourselves with the fact that the slightly longer wait should result in a better game, though. "We're using the extra few weeks to make sure everything about the game is just right," explained Joseph Cochran, president of Wireframe.

Conventions

Big days out for gaming types who want to meet like-minded gamers.

Convention diary

8-10th November
Clan Amber 96
Residential convention for the diceless RPG *Amber* at the Holiday Inn Garden Court, Edinburgh. ***Nicky & Alan Cannon*** **0131 4476124**, 70/5 Craighouse Gardens, Edinburgh EH10 5UN. The Web site is at `http://www.Abdn. ac.uk/~t03ndm/CAINE.html`

17th November
Sandwell Skirmish 1996
Re-enactment groups of all periods, table-top wargames, roleplaying, dice and cards at West Bromwich Gala Baths from 10am-4pm. For more info contact **Tom Penn,** 1 Harnall Close, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands B90 4QR

24th November *M:TG* in Redcar
Magic: The Gathering competition in Redcar, Cleveland on Sunday 24th November 1996. Entry fee £5. First prize – Black Lotus. Application forms from **Mr C Whitehouse,** 16 Oxford Street, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS1 4NN. Please enclose a SAE for forms.

Seymour J Clancy III's great outing

The distinction between reality and make-believe becomes blurred – as Seymour discusses the case of one Thomas Cruise...

When you spend your ent-ah-lie-elf denouncing famous roleplayers, there is nothing more comfertizing, ah fahnd, than the prospect of a pleasant even-ing in front of a videoing-machine and telling-vishun and perusing you-er favouraht actors performing in a fillum about fawcetTs.

Ah reefer to Tom Cruise and Sean Penn and the fillum that is called *Taps*. Ah had been fatigued bah mah strenuous elephants to invertebrate the ant ticks advocated bah the dynasty that is the say-elf stahled, so-called **arcane** editorial team – and ah was lulled into a laht slumber when ah heared Tom ask Sean if he wood des-aah a quaaht-naht-in, playing *Donjons & Dragoons* – the roleplaying gay-em in which fierce, rough cavalrymen and pigeons are detained against their wills in the tower of a castle. Imagine mah dysphoria – imaginary dishes dishonourably defrocked in mah draawing-roo-em. *(Get a grip man – Ed.)*

Thanks and T-shirts to Robert Sandlan of East Kilbride and Mexal, who could be from anywhere for all we know. Tell us where you live Mexal.

Gold Rush Games wants you!

Adventure writers sought for the entire Gold Rush line, including *Traveller, Hero* and *Sengoku*. Could this be your chance for stardom?

US roleplaying company Gold Rush Games has announced a new licensing deal allowing it to produce supplements for *Traveller* from Imperium Games, and is looking for authors for these and other releases.

For *Traveller*, the company is interested in 8-10,000 word adventures to be used in anthologies, the first of which is due to be published next spring. Gold Rush is also looking for adventures of a similar length to be used in adventure anthologies for *Champions, Dark Champions* and *Fantasy Hero*.

Meanwhile, work continues on the new roleplaying game *Sengoku: Chambara Roleplaying in Feudal Japan*, which has replaced the planned re-release of *Bushido*. *Sengoku* will be based on an expanded version of the new *Fuzion* game system developed by the recently-merged Hero Games and R. Talsorian Games. Gold Rush currently has a number of supplements planned for the game that have yet to be assigned authors, and is also looking for writers with an interest in the Feudal Japanese genre.

If you're interested, you can download Gold Rush Games' submission guidelines from its Web site at `http://members.aol.com/goldrushg/index.html` Gold Rush can be contacted via e-mail at `goldrushg@aol.com`, or by phone (providing you can afford the phone rates), on 001 916 684.

BACKFIRE

Granted, it's completely crass, but then, when has that ever stopped us before? This month's card of high regard is none other than 'Backfire' from *Wildstorms*. What does it do? Well, the unsavoury chap depicted upon it takes out his foes by farting at them. Lovely. Reminds me why I should never travel across the Atlantic on a plane with Andy ever again.

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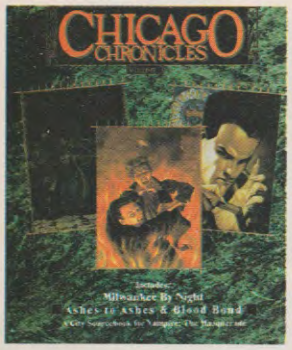
White Wolf Explosion

Five new books from White Wolf are on their way...



White Wolf has always maintained strong support for its games, and recently the company has been very busy. No less than five new books have just been released.

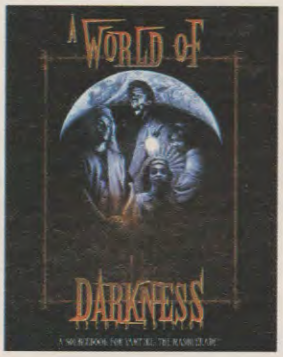
The first, *Chicago Chronicles Volume 3*, collects three out-of-print supplements for *Vampire: The Masquerade* into one hefty 240-page book, and concludes the story of the War for Chicago, begun in the first two volumes of the series.

Included here are Milwaukee by Night, which details the dark side of the city and its undead rulers, complete with details of their politics and feuds, and the adventures Ashes to Ashes and Blood Bond.

Masses of new information for all World of Darkness referees – and every one to be reviewed in the next issue of arcane. Hurrah.

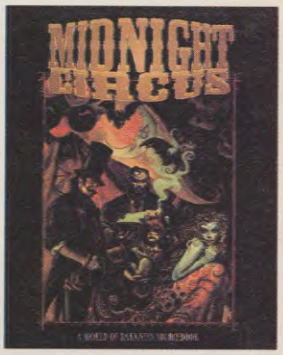
Next comes *The Book of Crafts* for *Mage: The Ascension*. This 140-page book expands the background of the game to include those magickal societies that have forsaken the Traditions and the Technocracy, choosing instead to follow the Paths of their ancestors. The supplement features full details of eight of the largest groups outside the four familiar to *Mage* players and referees, including Templars, Voodoo Priests and Amazons. Also included are new rules for some of the unique abilities of these rare mages, and notes on introducing them to your *Mage* campaign.

For *Changeling: The Dreaming* comes *Kithbook: Trolls*, which takes a closer look at the warriors of the Fae. The book promises to expand upon the basic information contained in *Changeling*, exploring the history and traditions of these physically imposing Changelings. Troll society and behaviour will also be examined, providing tips for roleplaying Trolls in the game, and there will also be a range of new Merits and Flaws for Troll characters.



Finally come two books about the World of Darkness itself, suitable for use with any of the *World of Darkness* games. The first, *A World of Darkness 2nd Edition*, is a revised and updated version of the original book, and forms something of an 'atlas' of the World of Darkness. Each chapter deals with a continent or important area of the world, highlighting the differences between it and our own. There is info on previously covered regions including Africa and China, and info on cities such as New York, Rio and Sydney.

Midnight Circus, on the other hand, describes a strange wandering fair that has travelled the World of Darkness for thousands of years. Currently known as Anastagio's Olde Time Lunar Carnival and Midnight Circus, this deadly group has been designed for use with any of the five *World of Darkness* games. Within its tents and sideshows lurk horrors that pose a threat to even the most powerful vampires, werewolves, mages, wraiths or faeries.



As well as details of the circus and the characters that run it, *Midnight Circus* also includes a complete adventure, The Waste Land. This has been designed for use in any campaign, and faces players with a deadly menace which must be confronted while dealing with the hypnotic appeal of the circus itself.

All five of these books will be reviewed in the next issue of **arcane**.

If you can't get hold of a copy of *Midnight Circus*, grab a copy of arcane 11, for that issue's Encounter featured a travelling circus. What a coincidence, eh?

All *Vampire* referees will want to rush to this month's Encounter too. It's called Starmoor Hall, it starts on page 41, and it's about, well, vampires.

Type II Tournament changes

New rules for *Magic: The Gathering* tournaments announced.

The Duellists' Convocation International (DCI) has announced several changes to the standard Type II Tournament rules for *Magic: The Gathering*, including which card sets can be used in deck construction.

As of 1st January 1997, cards from the *Fallen Empires* expansion and the *Ice Age* stand-alone set will no longer be permitted in Type II play. The DCI will, however, continue to sanction a number of different *Ice Age* tournament types. More significantly, the guidelines used to determine which card sets can be used in Type II play have been altered. The changes have been made due to inconsistencies in print run size, which meant that some expansions remained legal for longer than planned, while others were removed from the Type II environment before players had a chance to fully explore the cards' abilities. The basic sets and stand-alone sets will replace old versions of each other as the new version is released, and limited-edition expansions will be replaced by the next limited-edition expansion a year later, so both the Type II deck construction rules and floor rules have been altered.

The DCI has also announced that the *M:TG Fifth Edition* rules will become the standard rules at all official tournaments from 8th November. The new rules are available in *Mirage Starter Sets*. For more details, see the WOTC WWW sites at `http://www.wizards.com/` and `http://wotc.ukonline.co.uk/` or phone ☎ 0245 125599

Hyper animé action

Vanguard Media release Manga CD-ROM

There are a few people out there who are absolutely mad about Manga – and it'll be those very same people who'll get all excited about the *Animé HyperGuide Volume 1: Project Ako*, an interactive CD-ROM for PCs which details all manner of information relating to *Project Ako*, one of the most famous of the Manga releases.

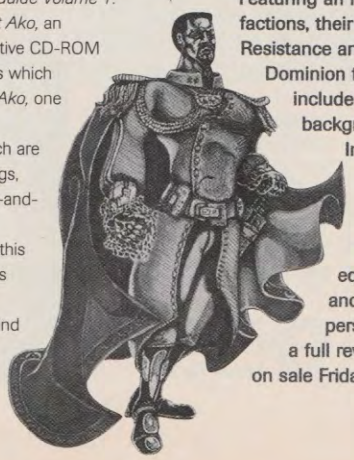
The disc contains various film highlights, which are linked to the original storyboards' animation drawings, hundreds of images from the film which can be cut-and-pasted directly into documents, and a full stereo soundtrack as well. You'll be glad to hear that after this first release, Vanguard will be launching similar discs related to other popular Manga titles.

No price has been fixed as yet, but you can find out more information by phoning Vanguard Media on ☎ 001 212 242 5317.

Traxsis

Explore the factions of *Leystorm: The Dominion*

British company Rolefile Games has announced the first sourcebook for its roleplaying game *Leystorm: The Dominion* (arcane 11). *Traxsis* is the first of two books which will detail the various factions that fight to survive in the wastes of the game's world.



Featuring an in-depth look at the factions, their alliances with the Resistance and their fight against Dominion forces, the book also includes more history and background for the game. In addition, there are new rules for Trackship, Gungiant and Siege combat, new equipment, vehicles and stats for Dominion personnel. Look out for a full review in arcane 14, on sale Friday 29th November.

Overload on the X-Files

Win a special edition boxed set of the first season of the *X-Files*.

arcane COMPO

Every *X-Files* fan will be rushing to get hold of a copy of a limited edition boxed set of *X-Files* videos, containing the entire first season, when it's launched on 4th November. The five videos of which the set comprises amount to over 20 hours of nail-biting mystery, together with five different interviews with the *X-Files* creator, Chris Carter, that won't be available anywhere else. 20th Century Home Entertainment is keeping the availability of these boxed sets extremely limited, so much so that it expects to shift the whole lot within two weeks of the release date. However, we've managed to team up with the company to offer the chance for one extremely lucky **arcane** reader to bag themselves a box set for free – good going when you consider that they will cost £80 a piece in the shops.

Not satisfied with that, we've also managed to get hold of ten copies of *File 6 – Master Plan*, the sixth in the series of *X-Files* videos which is due for release on that same date. This vid' features the final episodes of series three, some four months before they're to be shown on Sky, and a massive 11 months before terrestrial TV watchers will lay their eyes on them. These ten videos will go to the ten runners up, drawn from the entries for the boxed set. And those of you who are unlucky enough to miss out on these competition copies will be able to buy a copy for yourself from video stores at a cost of £14.99.

To enter our special *X-Files* video competition, all you have to do is answer the following question...

"Hey, Mulder, I hear our whole first series is coming out in a special boxed set, and it's going to be really rather great. Hurrah!"

Q How many episodes make up the first series of the *X-Files*, including the pilot?

"I believe... You're correct Scully. And if you didn't work for the FBI you could enter the cool **arcane** competition and win one for yourself. Doh."

Send your entries to: Don't forget your torch, **arcane**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

Rules

1. Employees of Future Publishing, 20th Century Fox, the FBI and people who stand in corners smoking cigarettes and saying very little cannot enter.
2. Try to send us more than one entry and we'll have you abducted. The editor decides who seeks the truth, and who finds it.
3. The closing date is 16th December, or the day aliens abscond with the population of Bristol; whichever falls first.

Win AD&D Starter Sets!

Fancy becoming a referee? Then make life easy for yourself by winning one of ten *AD&D Starter Sets* from TSR...

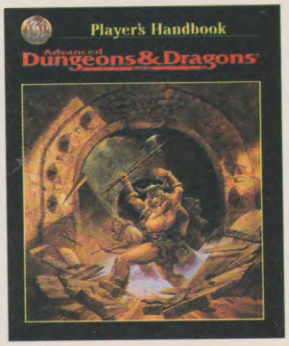
arcane COMPO

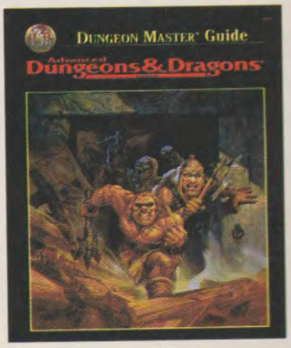
It's probably the most popular roleplaying game in the world, but then, it's also one of the most complex to get to grips with, especially for novice referees. With this in mind TSR has launched a new *Starter Set* for the game, which includes cut-down versions of the *Player's Manual*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Monstrous Compendium*, together with a host of other goodies. We'll be reviewing it next month, but in the meantime TSR has given us ten copies to give away to ten lucky **arcane** addicts. So, if you fancy a set, have a pop at this question:

These aren't the real *AD&D* rulebooks, mind you (even though they look just like them), these are the ultra-skinny versions which come in the *AD&D Starter Set*. Honest.

Is *AD&D* the most popular RPG, like, ever? Find out in the next issue of **arcane** when we present the readers' poll of all-time favourite games.

Q What did TSR originally stand for?





Rules

1. Employees of Future Publishing and TSR shall have their carrier pigeons' wings severely clipped.
2. More than one attack in a combat round is strictly forbidden.
3. The editor is the DM and he calls the shots around here.
4. You have until the 16th day in the month of darkest winter to complete your quest.

Aria is coming... honest!

Gremlins attack **arcane** offices again.

Despite what it says on the cover of this magazine, the more astute among you will have noticed that we haven't actually reviewed the *Aria* roleplaying game this month. Unfortunately our copy of the game was delayed, and we were unable to fit it into the already packed reviews section this issue.

Never fear, though, a full review of the game will be appearing in next month's issue, **arcane** 14, which will be on sale on Friday 29th November. In the meantime we've sent our crack squad of gremlin killers into the dark labyrinthine maze of the postal system to ruthlessly hunt down and kill the pesky critters who were responsible for the delay.

Win a Magic Marvel

arcane COMPO

Mirage is the best looking expansion set for *Magic* ever. There, we've said it, and we've got no less than 3,960 *Mirage* cards up for grabs...

As your lawyers (well, that's not strictly speaking true, obviously, but then we could be, and we offer very reasonable rates), we advise you to buy lots and lots of *Mirage* cards. *Mirage*, of course, being the latest stand-alone expansion for *Magic: The Gathering* which scores an extremely healthy 9 out of 10 in our review (check it out on page 64 of this issue). Why? (That is, why do we advise you to buy lots of cards, rather than why did we give it 9 out of 10 – you can read about that for yourself of page 64, but then we've done that plug thing already.) Because, as with *Alliances*, the last expansion which was launched way back in June, some of the set's cards are bound to rapidly establish themselves as 'must haves', and therefore demand pretty high prices on the secondary market (besides, of course, being jolly good fun to play with).

But, that's not the point. For the point here is not to tell you why *Mirage* is so darn great (that's on page 64, as you know), but to give you some cards for free. Well, almost – you'll need a stamp and a postcard or sealed envelope, but such costs are negligible when compared with the prizes which we, in association with the British wing of Wizards of the Coast, have to offer. Which are, to be precise:

One display of 12 *Mirage* starter packs, PLUS one display of 36 *Mirage* booster packs to the overall winner of the competition (that's a huge 1,260 cards), in addition to...

One display of *Mirage 36* booster packs to five lucky runners up (that's 540 cards each), and...

A special *Mirage* T-shirt to ten (almost as) lucky nearly-runners up.

Phew! What a plentiful amount of bounty.

So, what exactly have you got to do to get a piece of the action, as it were? Well, it's simple, just answer this dead easy question:

Q What, by definition, is a mirage?

Rush your answers, post-haste, to **arcane**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW on the aforementioned postcard (or sealed envelope) marked 'Gimme *Mirage*, man'. And good luck.

Rules

1. Those who work for Future Publishing and Wizards of the Coast (British wing or otherwise) may not, I say, may not enter this *Mirage* competition.
2. Okay, so you may be allowed four copies of any given card in a *Magic* deck, but one entry per person is the limit here matey.
3. The editor says: "TAPI"
4. You have until Monday 16th December, after which all entries will be sent to our local MP (sorry Don).
5. The bit about the MP was a lie.

COMPO WINNERS

Ooh ah TSR

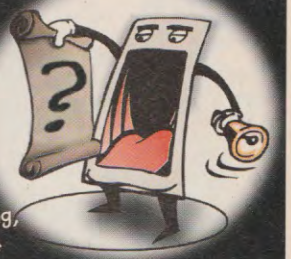
AJ Sykes of Bonnybridge wins a box of TSR 'novels'.

Top Secret and Highly Confidential

Richard Aitken of Aberdeen, DR Boulton of Effingham, Chris Crockford of Watchet, Steve Fitton of Rochdale, Scott Hughes of Wavertree, Nicholas McGlincy of Wormley, Michael O'Brien of Newcastle-under-Lyme, James Paul of High Wycombe, Lorenzo Trenti of Castelfranco Emilia and Russell Williams of Ormskirk all win a copy of Wasteland Games' *Maji*.

next month in arcane

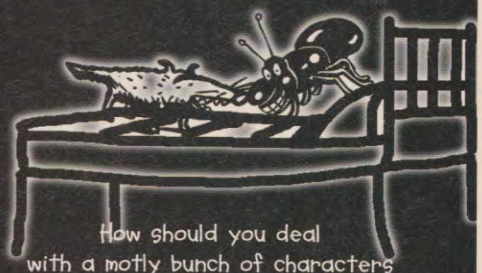
Who gets your vote?



For the first time ever in the history of roleplaying, arcane presents the definitive listing of the top 50 most popular RPGs in existence, as chosen by you, the arcane readers. Prepare to be shocked by the results...

Roleplaying adventures should have a start, a middle and an end, they should be fast, fluid and fun. Just like movies, in fact; a view that we expound next issue...

Strange bedfellows



How should you deal with a motley bunch of characters who all have different motives and goals in an adventure? We reveal all...

Plus! A gooey mix of super features, unsurpassed reviews and hot gaming gossip

arcane 14 will be on sale on Friday 29th November

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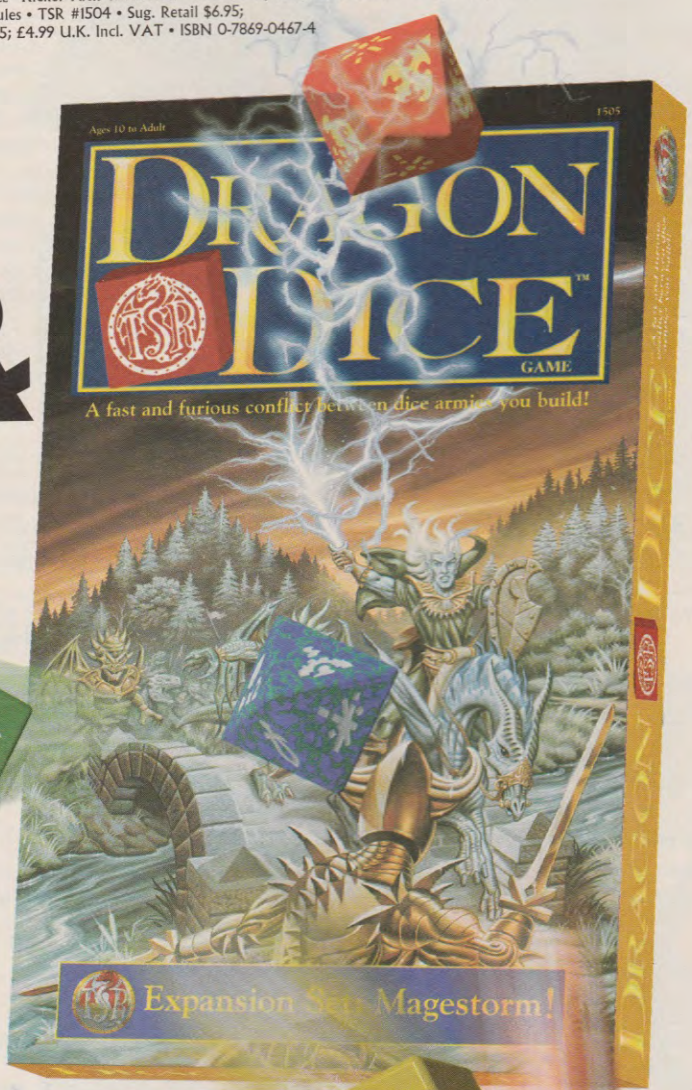

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Use your imagination

Is improvisation the key to more creative roleplaying? It can be, though you shouldn't bin your rules just yet...

ANDREW RILSTONE

Andrew is the editor of *Interactive Fantasy*, the journal of roleplaying and story-making systems, and is also a regular contributor to arcane.

Andrew Rilstone is a big fan of freeform gaming, which is very similar to what he's been expounding in this month's column. For more on freeform gaming, check out Andrew's feature on the subject which appeared in arcane 10. Turn to page 53 if you missed it.

IT WAS A THURSDAY EVENING; we hadn't planned to do any gaming, but we were chatting about the types of games we would like to play. We all agreed that we would like to play a superhero game. Not one about people in masks saving the Earth from the carcass men of Jupiter – that would be childish and geekish, and anyway we'd done it last week. We fancied something much more low-key and realistic.

"Sounds like a good idea," I said. (That's my personal curse, I think everything is a good idea. If someone had said 'Let's set up an RPG in which everyone plays lamposts who are only allowed to talk in Haiku', I would think it was a good idea and volunteer to referee.) "To make sure the game is as down-to-earth as it can be, you aren't going to play imaginary characters, you are going to play yourselves. Last night, there was a strange flash of light across the sky. Since then, each of you has noticed that you have a strange paranormal power. Richard – you can move objects without touching them. Nick – you can float through the air. Jon – you can teleport... Okay? Time in. Roleplay!"

Run with the idea

To the players' credit, they picked up the ball and ran with it with no further pushing or shoving from me. The first thing which happened was that Richard dropped his cup, and, without thinking, telekinetically caught it. Once he had revealed his 'secret' the other characters revealed theirs too. Everyone started to discuss what to do next. Some of them thought they should go straight to the newspapers and sell their story; others wanted to keep it secret or try to find some sympathetic scientist at the university who could work out what was going on. At least one of them held out on the theory that they were all quite clearly going mad and needed to see a psychiatrist. Interestingly enough, not one single player suggested that they should start wearing their underpants outside their tights and fight crime.

All this time, as referee, my mind was racing. Sooner or later, something would have to actually happen. Nick's character had mentioned that he had gone flying over the park that afternoon. I thought it was a safe bet that someone had seen him. So... there was a knock on the door. It was a plain clothes police officer. His name wasn't Mulder, but it might as well have been.

"Why not just see where your imagination takes you? The best ideas are too big to be put in boxes."

We got nine weeks of gameplay out of this idea. I didn't write down a single word, or make a single map, or plan a scenario the whole time. We didn't write anything down on character sheets, and we certainly didn't role any dice. We simply followed the idea to see where it would take us. It took us to some very weird places indeed – too weird to explain in a short column. Suffice to say that, at the time, it made sense for Richard to be chasing penguins around a cricket pitch.

Now, it would be nice to say: 'This game changed my life! We threw out our rulebooks and stopped writing scenarios. From that day on, we always ad libbed our games on the spur of the moment!' Unfortunately, that wouldn't strictly speaking be true. This game was very much a one-off. The next time we wanted to play a new RPG, I wrote a sensible scenario and we diced up characters.

So why am I bothering to tell you about it now?

I think the game taught us some important lessons. It is possible to play a game with no rules, no dice, no character sheets, no maps. It is even possible to throw out the scenario. Chuck an interesting premise at an imaginative group of players, and they will usually make an interesting game out of it.

The game that we ended up with was not the one we set out to play. We'd intended to play a version of *Watchmen* – we ended up with something surreal and paranoid, with almost nothing to do with superheroes. It just emerged, spontaneously, because we were improvising.

Roleplaying games are supposed to be as limited as your imagination – but too often our imagination is limited by what it says in the rulebook, what it says in the background pack, what the dice say happened and what the players expect to happen. Sometimes – not every time, but just once in while – you should put all that aside. Why not just see where your imagination takes you?

The best ideas are too big to be put in boxes.

Ed's Comment

While I agree with most of what Andrew has said, I can't emphasise enough that it takes a very experienced referee and a competent bunch of players to pull off the kind of roleplaying experience which he and his group have managed with the super-powered 'normals'. I too have had a campaign which didn't have any structured scenarios – it was for the *Living Steel* game, where survival and negotiation with local power forces formed the essence of the gameplay. But, had I attempted to run this game at the start of my refereeing 'career', I would have floundered, big time. You have to be extremely comfortable with the precepts of the situations you intend to create, and even more comfortable with the players who are taking part in the gaming experience.

For the most part, I suggest that you stick with the rulebooks, even if you choose to ditch the rules. By which I mean take the campaign background, the suggested plots and ideas, and then use these to satisfy your improvisational urges. Trying to create a satisfying roleplaying system from scratch is almost impossible – it's rare that you'll come across a referee who can hold a session together without any pre-thought at all.

Rules-light games lend themselves to improvisational play. A number of suggested 'systems' to look for include *Star Wars*, *Paranoia*, *Amber* and even *Dragonlance, Fifth Age*.

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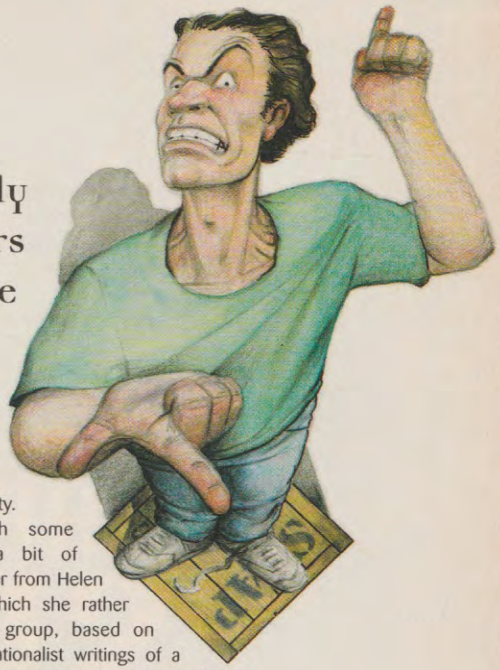
LARPing it up

Live-action roleplaying gets a pretty bad rap, not only from outside the hobby, but from tabletop roleplayers as well. **Stuart Downes** from Southampton is not in the least bit impressed...



LIVE-ACTION ROLEPLAYING, isn't it great? Well, to an unenlightened and rather vocal bunch of people, it's anything but. On the whole, us live-action roleplayers are a tolerant lot. We are more than happy to run our games and not to bother anyone else, apart from disrupting the odd family walk in the forest where people are, for some reason, perplexed by the sight of a group of chain mail-clad lunatics screaming in unison, "Death for the orc sum!" before trying to hack a guy's head off. It's extremely rare to encounter a LARPer who has any degree of intolerance towards how someone else decides to spend their free time. This is probably down to the extremely broad spectrum of people who engage in this subset of the roleplaying hobby – at a recent event we had representatives from all walks of life, from unemployed travellers to stock brokers.

Yet, unfortunately, we do not enjoy such unbiased treatment from other people, even from other members of the roleplaying hobby. I've frequently met roleplayers who sneer at LARP, even though most of them have never tried it. Such a small-minded view seems quite incredible, especially given the nature of roleplaying, which I have always seen as being one of acceptance. I mean, an adventure wouldn't last five minutes if the players couldn't manage to get along together, to formulate plans together and to have fun together. Roleplaying adventures are all about team work and tolerance, both in and out of character. Instead, LARPers get this kill-joy, snotty attitude from nerds who spend their time with their heads stuck in *AD&D* rulebooks trying to learn all the tables by heart. However, for those people out there with more imagination, I'll say this: come along to a live-action roleplaying event, chat to weird and wonderful people, try to follow the convoluted plot line, kill some monsters and have a few beers. What, I ask you, could be better?

As for the press and the mass media, well that's a different kettle of carp altogether. They seem to have LARPers tarred with the same brush as Satanists, cultists and armed robbers. People say that the media is a mirror, reflecting the views and attitudes of society. If this is the case, I can't see the media's position changing in the near future, despite the best efforts of several worthy groups such as the Adventurers' Guild, Palladin and An t-Sireadh Eu-comasach, a Scottish company which actually uses live-action roleplaying to help educate young children. The only way the rant of these journalists is going to change is by a shift in popular opinion, and even though LARP's popularity is growing it will always remain a minority activity.

And so it was with some disappointment and not a bit of annoyance that I read the letter from Helen Gorman in **arcane** 11, in which she rather pompously chided a LARP group, based on nothing more than the sensationalist writings of a tabloid newspaper. All I have to say is that all members of the Bradford University Vampire Society should be blood-hunted for breaking the Camarilla! All this means is that they didn't do well enough, because the whole point in most vampire games is to avoid being seen. I've done several sword fights and shoot-outs within Coventry city centre and have never been apprehended by the police, armed or otherwise. Seriously, yes, having to deal with the police is something which many of us have to cope with from time to time, especially if you're carrying your weapons on public transport or do your adventuring in a public area. However, if you stay cool and keep your head, it can even be somewhat amusing (they *never* believe that it's just a foam sword – they always insist on giving it a squidge).

What is now needed is a greater knowledge of LARP, both within the roleplaying industry and outside of it. This is, quite plainly, severely lacking. Indeed, prime areas where you would expect to find information about live-action roleplaying (such as this magazine) seem to avoid it. *(Oh no we don't. Turn to page 38 for a feature on this very subject – Ed.)* We need to educate the masses about the enjoyment there is to be had out of LARP, and hope that somehow we'll start to be seen in a more rosy light.

LET US KNOW
If you've got a live-action roleplaying event planned, then let us know. We will happily include any LARP events in our Conventions columns in the Despatches section of the mag. Please try to ensure that we receive the details two months prior to publication.

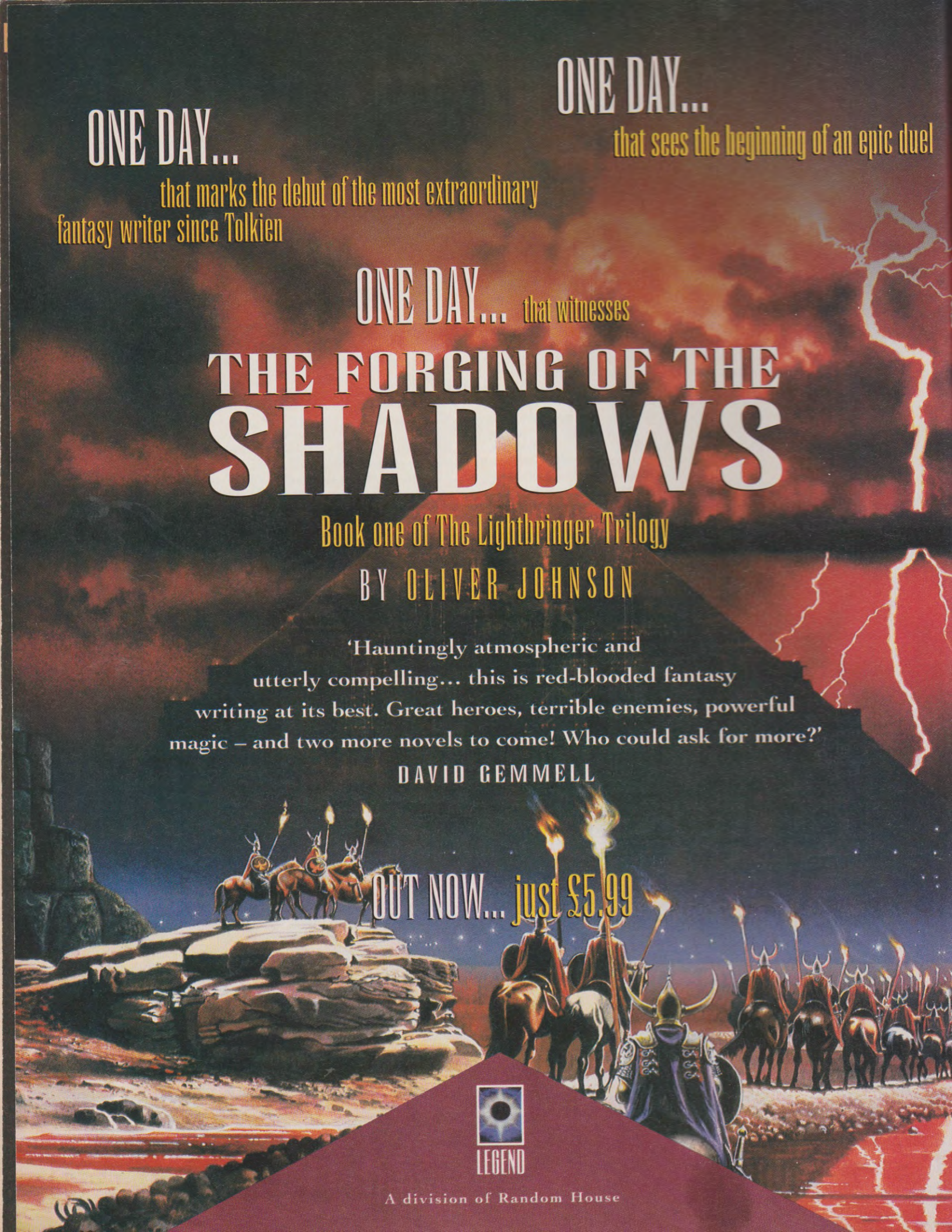
"LARPers get this kill-joy, snotty attitude from nerds who spend their time with their heads stuck in *AD&D* rulebooks."

Ed's Comment

What makes a roleplaying game? By definition, it has to have something to do with playing a role, and whether that be by merely assuming a persona over a tabletop, or going the whole hog and assuming the physical form (as best you can) and taking to the glens of Scotland to battle it out *Braveheart*-style, all roleplayers should respect their fellows for attempting to portray the roles they assume in whatever manner they choose. The whole point of roleplaying games, as far as I'm concerned, is to have fun. And providing any given individual is having fun pursuing the goals of the roleplaying hobby, how can anyone else criticise? Yes, we all poke fun at others from time to time, I'd be the first to admit that, but when those jibes start to influence the decisions of others to get involved in an aspect of the roleplaying hobby, well, that's just going too far.

HAVE YOUR SAY
We've covered all manner of subjects on the Soapbox page of **arcane**, from the way that independent stores treat their customers, through the differences between storytelling and roleplaying to the ongoing women in fantasy art debate. The **arcane** Soapbox page is the place to express your opinions. So, don't miss out.

ON THE SOAPBOX **is your page – it's where we give you the opportunity to get something off your chest (as long as it's to do with the gaming industry, of course). The views expressed by you on this page aren't necessarily the views of arcane, or of the arcane editorial team. If you'd like to have your say, send in a piece of around 1,000 words long to: On the Soapbox, arcane, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Or e-mail it to:** arcane@futurenet.co.uk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Money crimes

this month matthew green takes a look at a game for would-be power-crazed megalomaniacs. well, a game where you have to make dosh, expand your business empire and be darn nasty to your competitors.

Criminal Minds

The editor divulges his secrets for success (or lack of it) in *It's a Crime*.

Okay, so we're only five turns into Game 5 of *It's a Crime*, but there's been plenty going on in the Big Apple over the past couple of months – deals have been struck, gangs have been growing and I've now managed to capture no less than 15 blocks, ensuring that I'm on top of things in the battle for domination over my rival gangs.

For those of you who don't know, *It's a Crime* is a fairly simple game of underworld domination in New York. Each of the 100 players in any given game controls a street gang (which starts off with around 15 members) and a single block which forms their 'turf'. As the game progresses you take over other blocks, wage war with gangs in your area, buy and sell dope to make some cash, rob, burn, mug and perform other unsavoury tasks to gain cash and notoriety. Yes, it sounds like the kind of thing that your mother would have a fit about, but in fact this is one of the most fun PBMs going.

So, how am I doing? I've managed to make a couple of friends, which is always a good thing – trying to fight your way through the first dozen or so turns only results in tears (mostly yours). I've managed to get the size of my gang up to a happy 45 members, and I've got enough money stashed at my head quarters to buy several sub-machine guns. Things are looking pretty good. Unfortunately, my gang (the Arcane Rocks) hasn't managed to establish itself as a notoriously bad bunch of dudes just yet, but that's because I've been making efforts to establish myself a sizable turf and a large gang rather than raising Hell in the area. However, all that is set to change.

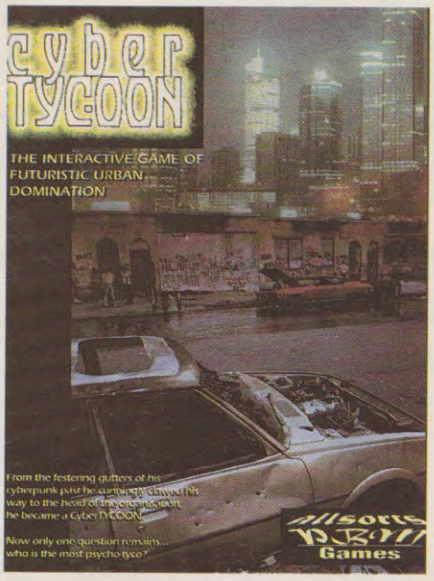
EVERY MONTH IN arcane we take a careful look at the merits of play-by-mail, the postal roleplaying set-up which enables you to enjoy your favourite hobby for the price of a stamp. There's a plethora of stuff out there for you to get involved in, and in each issue of **arcane** we bring you tips, news and incisive comment on current games being played.

In this month's installment we try to make some serious, if not altogether legal, money in *Cyber Tycoon*, a cyberpunk game from Allsorts PBM Games which takes financial ventures to violent extremes, report on the state of roleplaying fanzines and lament the closure of one, and Paul reveals how his involvement in *It's a Crime* is progressing – which you might consider as a cheaper alternative to *Cyber Tycoon*.

Cyber Tycoon

Allsorts PBM Games, £8 start/rules (inc 2 turns, £3 for further turns).

Of all the games within this particular genre, this one has probably the widest ranging spectrum of background and starting choices. Set in a futuristic cyberpunk environment, as the title suggests, each player may opt to control one of eight different money-making organisations... Entrepreneurial Syndicate, Organised Crime Ring, Religious Cult, Subversive Political Society, Pathological Cybernet Terminal or even an Interstellar Alien Entity! Twenty players each aim to elevate their organisation to that of dominance over the major metropolitan cities of the future – Chicago, Los Angeles, Berlin, Amsterdam and Tokyo. And take my word for it, it's definitely not easy.



Strategies for advancement include obvious economic measures, such as investing funds in takeover bids of rival corporations, redevelopment of existing retail outlets and improving product quality. However, the numerous options for covert operations are really what makes the game interesting, and as well as investing in various illegal money-making ventures, weapons, technology and a large army of secret operatives (which you can bring back from the dead if you've got the right pieces of cyber technology), you have the opportunity to even go as far as completely levelling entire financial districts that may be controlled by rival corporations. There's certainly no love lost between sides in this game, and tactical nuclear weapons may even crop up from time to time. Be warned!

Cyber Tycoon offers the business-minded among you the opportunity to really play dirty to become the number one international consortium – just like real life, in fact. It's a dead nasty game, with an impressive and well-presented rulebook. If you think you're ruthless enough to enter the fray, you can get some more information from:

Allsorts PBM Games, PO Box 25, Bude, Cornwall EX23 9YU.

The only possible downside to *Cyber Tycoon* is the relative expense of playing. If you'd like to start by trying something similar at a much lower price take a look at Paul Pettengale's *It's a Crime* journal entry this month (see the column on the left). The start-up rules and first two turns for *It's a Crime* are free to **arcane** readers, and future turns range from just £1-£2 each. The game is not nearly as modern as *Cyber Tycoon*, but both Paul and I agree it's still a very good play and well worth considering. Further information on *It's a Crime* can be obtained from its moderator. Write to: **KJC Games, FREEPOST, Thornton Cleveleys, FY5 3BR.**

PBM News

Sad news is the fold of Jamie Lang's amateur *PBMzine* (last reported in arcane 12). arcane will of course continue to provide coverage of fanzines, and the semi-professional *Flagship* is still being regularly printed every other month. This reliable magazine, which has had well over ten years of continuous publication to date, is entirely dedicated to PBM and an ideal read for all hard-core PBMers. arcane readers currently have the opportunity to take advantage of two special offers from *Flagship* – either send £10 for a subscription (including some useful money-off vouchers), getting a full refund if not entirely satisfied, or if you prefer just send four first-class stamps for a sample back issue. Send your requests and payments to: *Flagship*, PO Box 39, Exmouth, Devon EX8 1YR.

drop us a line **If you have any PBM-orientated questions or comments please drop us a line at arcane, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. We are particularly interested to hear from any players who have recently won games, or those of you who have cunning tips to share with other arcane readers. You never know, if you're lucky you might just manage to win yourself one of those coveted arcane T-shirts.**

OKAY, BOYS, LET'S GO OVER DIS AGAIN. WHEN THE BIG GUY INNA RED SUIT SHOWS UP, JIMMY VIOLIN HUSTLES 'IM INTO DA CORNER.
AN WE SEZ WE BEEN NICE...REAL NICE...THEN WE DEMAND THE GOODS. YEAH.
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The Price of Freedom

tasteless and jingoistic rubbish or tongue-in-cheek, harmless fantasy? **simon washbourne** reopens an old can of worms to find out.

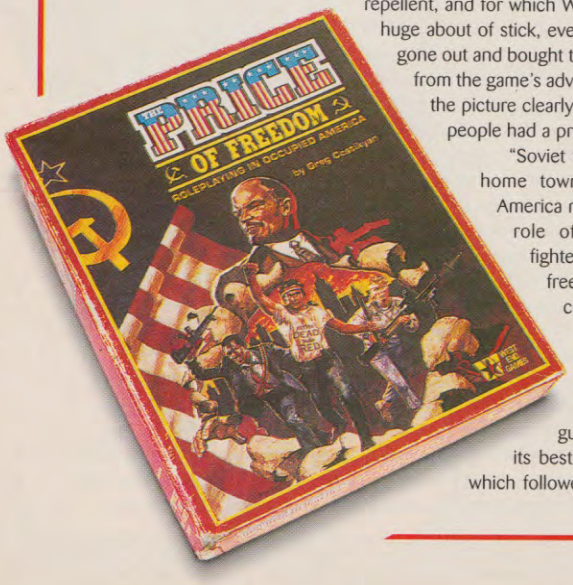
Designed by Greg Costikyan

Published by West End Games £12.95

First published in 1986

WELL, IF A GAME WERE TO BE judged on its quality of design, production and presentation alone, then there's no doubt in my mind that *The Price of Freedom* would have been a class act, rated right up there with the very best in the business. From character generation, which forced players to think about character background before they got bogged down in statistics and numbers, through uncluttered yet effective (and dare I say it, realistic) combat, on to sections on what the player characters would *actually* know about in situations in which they found themselves, *The Price of Freedom* was a design accomplishment of which West End Games could be proud.

The *Gamemaster's Book* actually started with an adventure, which is a first as far as I'm aware. It served to show the referee how to go about running a game before bewildering him with further rules and wodges of text to memorise. It stressed the importance for the players of setting the scene, and it was extremely well done, giving the referee all the help and advice he or she needed while presenting the players with the opportunity to get used to the rules system, and to settle into understanding their characters. The rest of the rules followed on from this adventure, of course, but nevertheless it was roleplaying and scene setting which was drilled first and foremost into the referee's mind.



So the game in itself was by no means rubbish – indeed, it was really rather clever. It was the theme for the game, however, which a great number of people found utterly repellent, and for which West End Games received a huge about of stick, even from people who hadn't gone out and bought themselves a copy. A quote from the game's advertising copy helps to paint the picture clearly, and explain why so many people had a problem with it...

"Soviet troops are landing in your home town. In this darkest hour, America needs heroes. You play the role of an American freedom fighter, desperately struggling to free your country from the crushing burden of Soviet oppression. The fate of America is in your hands." Hmm...

This really was gung-ho commie bashing at its best (well, there was *Paranoia* which followed this theme to a certain extent, but at least with that West End Games was taking the mickey a little). No, this was seen by many as a perpetuation of the American Way as it should never manifest itself. It's interesting to note that (as was pointed out in the *White Dwarf* review at its time of release), players are encouraged to defend, "Your house, your car, your VCR... Your family." The reviewer, Ashley Shephard, noted that these defensible objects of your desire fell, "in that order". *The Price of Freedom* was American apple pie, and strangely people were queuing up for a slice of the action.

Greg Costikyan and the rest of West End Games were well aware of *The Price of Freedom's* provocative premise, and were at pains to point out that the game was a fantasy, not reality, and that in writing the game they had not intended to offend anyone.

Those who bought it were clearly not concerned with the moral issues, or perhaps didn't even consider that somebody might take issue with the game's central premise. I can't believe that those who did buy it (and I was one) thought of it in a different way to any other heavily combat-orientated roleplaying system, or for that matter a wargame or a boardgame set, for example, in Vietnam. It was, to these people, simply another game to add to their collection.

While *The Price of Freedom* did have many very vociferous objectors, I guess it sold reasonably well not only because West End Games could afford to promote it heavily, and because it was distributed by Games Workshop over here in the UK (who also came under fire for doing so), but possibly because gamers wanted to see what all the fuss was about. It makes you think that perhaps this was the intention all along. You start to wonder whether *The Price of Freedom* would have sold so well if it was about an alien invasion rather than a Soviet one. There certainly wouldn't have been the same level of furore over the game's central theme helping to boost sales figures.

The Price of Freedom is perhaps all that much more acceptable now, given the end of the Cold War and the warming relations between East and West. Indeed, if it were to be released again now I'm sure it would be seen as nothing more than fantasy. But remember, the Berlin Wall was still standing in 1986, and there was still the very real threat of nuclear conflagration. But how would people feel about a game in which the participants played the roles of IRA sympathisers? Or Columbian drug barons? Or Nazi concentration camp soldiers? Makes you think about the boundaries between fantasy and reality, and just how far game designers are willing to go. I suggest they'd go a lot further than many of us would give them credit for.

"You start to wonder whether *The Price of Freedom* would have sold so well if it was about an alien invasion rather than a Soviet one."

CRITICISM Other RPGs that have received criticisms similar to those levelled at *The Price of Freedom* include *Delta Force* (Task Force Games) and *Twilight 2000* (GDW). *Freedom Fighters* had a similar theme, but was not widely publicised and didn't attract very much attention.

CONTROVERSY 'Better dead than red' was a slogan used on the box and adverts for *The Price of Freedom*, and it helped to cause a stir among the public.

TAKE TH

Isn't it about time you stopped letting someone else do all the hard work and took control of your roleplaying sessions? Armed with Steve Faragher's guide to refereeing, you and your players are guaranteed to have a great time.

Give it a go

It's no use complaining about your referee's decisions if you're not prepared to give the job a go yourself. If you know what you're doing, running a game can be just as rewarding as being a player, and here we're going to detail exactly what you need to know to get started in your new job. There are two reasons why you might want to become the referee of a roleplaying game. In the first instance, you have never played a roleplaying game before and are starting completely from scratch. You've found out enough about RPGs to realise that somebody has to take control of each gaming session and you need to know how to go about it. Or indeed you might not yet be sure you want to be a referee, or exactly what it entails. You're a difficult case. I'll deal with you in a minute.

In the second instance, you are somebody who's roleplayed a bit (or a lot) but has never taken the plunge into refereeing. Now you want to, possibly because you haven't played in a while and you want to get something started, or just as possibly because your current referee has recently started dropping hints on game night that it's about time somebody else put themselves through the administrative torment that he or she's been suffering for the last three years to give you all a bit of fun. If you fit this bill, you might want to skim the first few sections of this feature because you'll have a good idea of the why, who, where, when and what of refereeing. You'll be interested in the how.

Complete virgins come back over here. I've got a few things to say to you.

Why become a referee?

Being a referee is great fun, but it's a very different kind of fun to that enjoyed by the players. While their challenge lies in unravelling puzzles and defeating adversity, yours is in creating the challenges for them. Yours is a far more creative role than theirs, more like being the director of a film than being one of the audience. And as such, refereeing is not something to take on lightly. It will take up a lot of your time. It will require some sacrifice from you in terms of time and, probably, money and, if it's going to be really successful, it will be something that you have to make a commitment to over a fairly long period of time. All of which makes being a referee sound quite daunting. But don't worry, the rewards far outweigh the investment required.

There is no feeling quite as satisfying as making sure that some of your friends have a great deal of fun. It's kind of like that feeling you get when you give somebody exactly the right present for Christmas and you can see how pleased they are. A roleplaying game that's going well is one of the most fun things you can ever be involved in. And, of course, you can add to that the feeling of having created something. Like when you put a model together from a kit, or draw a particularly good picture, or write an interesting story. You can step back, look at your roleplaying game and say: "I did that. I'm responsible."

A GOOD EXAMPLE

If you want to see how a really good first adventure should look, try reading *The Haunted House* in the *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook. All the action takes place in one small location, there are only a few gentle mysteries to solve, but it really is an excellent beginner's scenario.

so, what the hell's an adventure?

If you're going to start running a roleplaying game, you'll need to either buy or design some adventures. Whatever rules system you end up using should explain to you what sort of adventure you might like to run for your players, but here are some extra bits and pieces to get you thinking along the right lines.

Adventures are about resolving conflict. Whether this means physically overcoming some enemy or mentally overcoming some puzzle, the core of the adventure will always be about achieving something. And the thing that makes roleplaying games different from other games is that, as your players overcome obstacles, so they develop. Whether this development is in the form of access to new equipment (magical items, powerful weapons, new science and technology) or in the form of character development (new or improved skills, better attributes and so on) it's important that you include these rewards in any adventure you're running.

And to help start you thinking about creating your own adventures, here's a list of brief synopses of some of the most common adventure ideas.

• Kill 'em: The most simple of all roleplaying adventures. There are some monsters or people out there that your players must kill to win. Perhaps a band of orcs molesting a village, or a criminal gang extorting people. Typically here the reward will come from those you free from the misery.

• Rescue: A variant of 'kill 'em', this involves your players travelling to somewhere to rescue somebody (or something) which has been captured by an enemy.

• A journey: Simply travelling between one place and another, this offers ample opportunity for describing new places visited along the way, interacting with NPCs and, er, some elements of 'kill 'em' described above.

• Guarding: Being employed to look after something or someone. This can be made particularly interesting to roleplay if the subject of the job is an awkward, difficult person, or if the thing being looked after is contraband.

And from these few ideas, many nights of entertainment can be had. Be sure to remember to introduce NPCs that will last too, not just enemies, but also friends of the players. It's great to have a recurring villain who always manages to escape at the last moment (think *Fu Manchu* here), but it's also fun to have someone like Sean Connery in *Highlander* who always turns up when you need him.

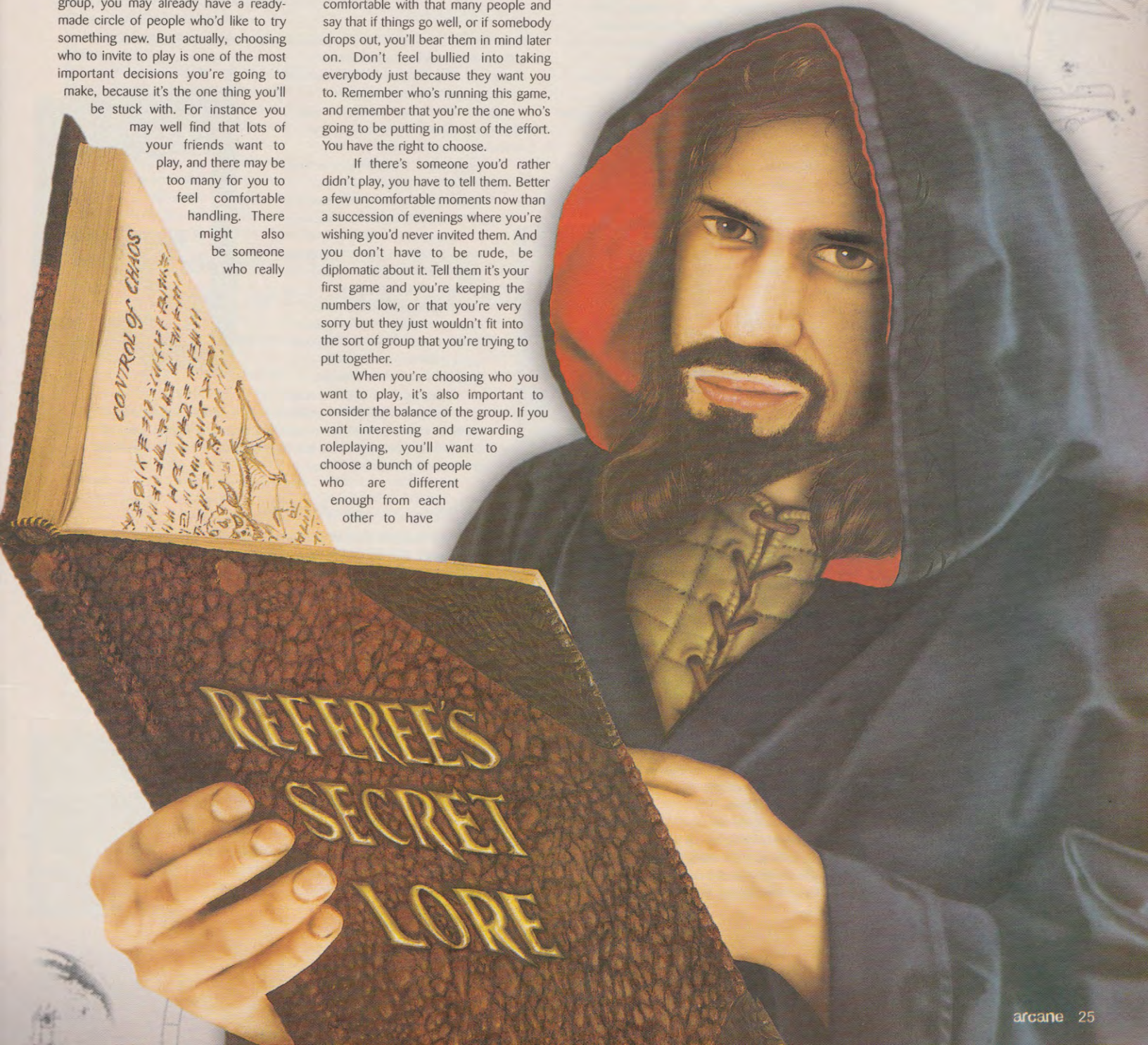
E PLUNGE

WHO DO I PLAY WITH?

This is apparently the easiest question of all. You play with your friends, you play with people who are interested and, if you've already been playing with a group, you may already have a ready-made circle of people who'd like to try something new. But actually, choosing who to invite to play is one of the most important decisions you're going to make, because it's the one thing you'll be stuck with. For instance you may well find that lots of your friends want to play, and there may be too many for you to feel comfortable handling. There might also be someone who really wants to play, but who you'd rather didn't, for whatever reason. So this is where you really have to learn the most important lesson that a good referee has to take in. You must BE FIRM, BUT KIND. If too many people are interested, *tell* some of them that you're not comfortable with that many people and say that if things go well, or if somebody drops out, you'll bear them in mind later on. Don't feel bullied into taking everybody just because they want you to. Remember who's running this game, and remember that you're the one who's going to be putting in most of the effort. You have the right to choose.

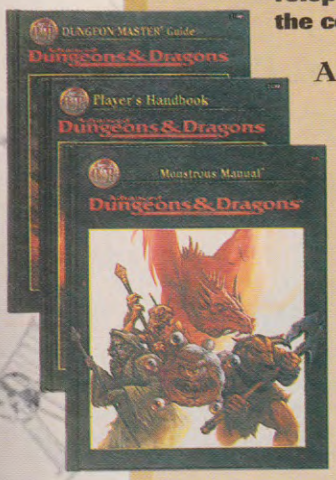
If there's someone you'd rather didn't play, you have to tell them. Better a few uncomfortable moments now than a succession of evenings where you're wishing you'd never invited them. And you don't have to be rude, be diplomatic about it. Tell them it's your first game and you're keeping the numbers low, or that you're very sorry but they just wouldn't fit into the sort of group that you're trying to put together.

When you're choosing who you want to play, it's also important to consider the balance of the group. If you want interesting and rewarding roleplaying, you'll want to choose a bunch of people who are different enough from each other to have plenty to talk about. By choosing the right group of people you can practically make a game run itself; they'll generate a lot of the ideas and conflicts for you, and all you'll have to concentrate on is fleshing out the background. ➔



systems overload

Because space is limited, here's a very brief guide to a few of the most popular systems and their suitability for novice referees. If you want to know more, try talking to somebody you know who roleplays and finding out what they recommend, and if that's not feasible, try the person behind the counter at your local roleplaying shop.



AD&D

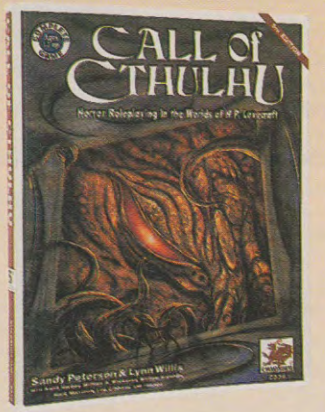
Undoubtedly the most popular of games, this is for many people the most obvious choice to begin with, however it's now a bit old-fashioned, and you will certainly find easier systems than this to start off with.

Background: Scores well here as practically everybody is familiar with the sort of fantasy setting that *AD&D* presents. It certainly enjoys one of the richest roleplaying environments.

Complexity: This is where it all goes wrong. *AD&D* carries a horrible mish-mash of wargaming rules over from its tabletop origins, as well as some of the most convoluted and difficult sets of roleplaying rules ever written. You should probably only consider *AD&D* if you already have experience of it as a player.

Support material: A phenomenal amount. The biggest range available. If you can get into the rules, you'll never be stuck for reference and inspiration.

Call of Cthulhu

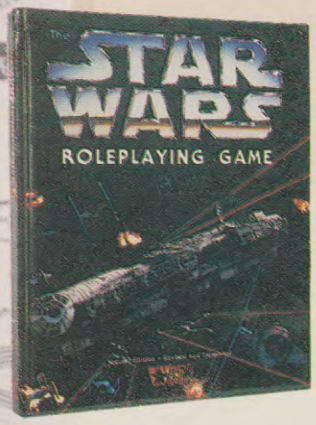


Based on the horror stories of HP Lovecraft and set in the 1920s, this game is all about finding and confronting an unspeakable horror that lurks just the other side of normality.

Background: Pretty easy for players to get into, the 1920s setting is familiar to everybody who's seen a few Hollywood films. Some knowledge of HP Lovecraft's books is an advantage, but is by no means compulsory.

Complexity: One of the easier games for beginners to understand, *Call of Cthulhu's* rules are just a few pages long. The rest of the game is given over to the background and atmosphere of the setting.

Support material: Pretty good, from a large range of campaigns and adventures to an entire range of fiction.



Star Wars

Inspired by the original movies and the subsequent books and comics, *The Star Wars Roleplaying Game* from West End Games offers players limitless opportunities for adventure in one of the most popular and exciting fictional settings ever created. In many ways this is the perfect system for new players and new referees, especially the most recent version (**arcane** 12).

Background: One of the game's greatest strengths – if you've seen the movies, you'll already have a good grasp of the game's background. If you haven't seen the movies, go shoot yourself.

Complexity: *Star Wars* is based around a wonderfully simple rules system that only uses normal, six-sided dice. Not only is it a breeze for both players and referees to learn, but it actively encourages heroic actions and high drama in true *Star Wars* style.

Support material: As well as the movies themselves, there's a vast range of novels and comics to draw from. West End Games continues to produce sourcebooks and supplements detailing the fiction in game terms, as well as original adventures and other material.

Traveller

The original science fiction roleplaying game, *Traveller* is one of the oldest games systems and a new edition has recently been released by newly-formed Imperium Games (**arcane** 10). It concentrates on fairly straight science fiction tales of space travel and exploration.

Background: Inspired by the 'hard' science fiction of authors such as Asimov and Clarke, *Traveller* is set in a vast interstellar empire, the Imperium. Anyone who's read much sci-fi will find it accessible.

Complexity: The latest version of the game has completely revised the rules system, making it more logical and easier to learn. There's still quite a bit to take in, but it shouldn't prove too difficult.

Support material: Over the years since the game's original release, heaps of supplements and sourcebooks have been released. Sadly, all are now out of print, but Imperium Games has a whole line of books scheduled for release over the next year.

World of Darkness

A group of five systems from White Wolf. Each of the games – *Vampire: The Masquerade, Werewolf: The Apocalypse, Mage: The Ascension, Wraith: The Oblivion* and *Changeling: The Dreaming* – uses the same rules and setting. *Vampire* and *Werewolf* are best suited to beginners.

Background: The World of Darkness is a nastier, more gothic version of our own world in which vampires, werewolves, mages, ghosts and faeries are real. Not only do they struggle for supremacy with each other, but also against darker powers.

Complexity: The rules are fairly simple (with the exception of the combat system), and the setting is easy to get to grips with. There are a lot of unique terms in each game, and the themes running throughout all of them are quite complex.

Support material: Second only to *AD&D*. An impressive range of sourcebooks, supplements and adventures is already available, and White Wolf continues to release more every month.

Where do we play?

So now you've got your band of adventurers, the next thing you have to decide is where you're going to meet up. This, again, is an important decision – it's crucial that you have an environment that's conducive to relaxation and concentration so that your game gets the chance it deserves to succeed, freed from the irritations of everyday life. Probably the ideal solution is if you, or one of your players, has a room of their own somewhere. A big table can be a good idea, particularly if you're going to be using a lot of player handouts and figures, but even if you're not, there's something about sitting around a table that immediately creates an atmosphere of expectation and togetherness.

The same can be achieved in somebody's living room, sat around on sofas. The important thing to do if you're playing at someone's house is to make sure that everybody else in the house is aware that you'd rather not be disturbed. Somebody popping in and out of the room every half hour to see how you're doing can be very disruptive, as can somebody in the same room as you trying to watch the telly or listen to music. In order for you to create the right atmosphere for your game, you'll need some peace and quiet.

If nobody has a room available, things get a little more difficult. You can try your local village hall, and pubs quite often have a private room that they'll be prepared to let you use for free. If that fails, then be more imaginative. I've refereed very successful games in a scout hut, and in one place where I lived with several others I discovered a cellar, cleaned out all the junk that was in it, begged a few chairs and a table from people, got everybody together one weekend and had a perfect environment. It may sound like a lot of effort just to find somewhere to roleplay, but it was well worth it. If you're still at school, you may well find that the school will be amenable to you forming a roleplaying society and providing you with somewhere to do it, particularly if you get in touch with TSR, which has a range of incentives to offer schools keen to get involved.

When do we play?

This is a topic that will require some research on your behalf. Talk to all the players in your group and find out when they're available. It's essential that you find a regular time every week or so when you can easily all get together. There are few things more disruptive to a good roleplaying game than a changing cast list every week, so it's important that you make sure everybody knows the when and where of the game early on so that they can all plan to be there. The easiest thing of all is to have a regular night every week when you play. That way everybody will know that, say, Thursday night is roleplaying night, and when they're asked if they want to do something else on that particular night they'll easily remember that they've already got a commitment.

What are we going to play?

Something you're comfortable with. Okay, that may sound like a bit of a cop-out answer, but roleplaying is about creating whatever you want. For a discussion on the relative merits of a few potential rules systems you might want to use the 'Systems Overload' box on the left, but when it comes to the kind of game that you want to play, that'll be largely up to you. However, let's go through just some of the options to get you started...

"If you know what you're doing, running a game can be just as rewarding as being a player."

Do I want to run ready-made scenarios or devise my own?

It's not always easiest to run ready-made scenarios – you can find that tailoring them to your campaign can cause you as much trouble as setting out your own ideas. Having said that, there are some pretty good campaign sets designed to introduce you to a game, such as *Night Below* for *AD&D* (9/10 **arcane** 4) or *The Traveller Adventure* for *Traveller*. It's certainly worth your while getting hold of something like that even if it's just to inspire you and give you an idea of how a campaign could run.

Do I want a familiar universe or should I choose a new one?

Because you're running your first ever game, you might well find that it's easier to set your adventure in a world that's already been created, such as the *Star Wars* universe or *Middle-earth*. This will save you quite a bit of thinking before you get started and will make it easier for the players to understand what you're getting at a lot of the time, because they're already familiar with the world. This is also largely true of *AD&D*, which has been so successful that the assumptions of its world – y'know, Elves don't like Dwarves, and Orcs are nasty, that sort of thing – are pretty well known to all concerned.

Will my campaign have a goal or be open-ended?

It can be helpful to have a goal of some kind for your players to achieve, at least in the short term. It could be retrieving a magic item, or getting enough money to buy a spaceship – something that will occupy the first few sessions of your roleplaying. This will help you get off to a quicker start and get the players motivated quickly. Open-ended campaigns, where your players choose entirely what they want to do, are great fun to play, but can be more difficult to get moving unless you're confident that your players will respond well to the greater challenge you're offering them.

Having answered these questions, and looked over the 'Systems Overload' box you should feel pretty close to choosing what you want to play. Of course, there may be no need for all this decision making, you may have been playing *AD&D* with your friends for ages and know that you want to carry on doing that, just with you as referee from now on. Whatever the case, you should now have your players, your game and somewhere to play. Now we'll just have a brief discussion on getting yourself organised and what to prepare.

Get it together

Typically, you're going to need to put aside at least an evening a week for preparation, preferably the night before you play. That way everything you've set up for the session will still be fresh in your mind on game night.

The first thing you'll need to do is get your players to create their characters. Either set some time aside ahead of your first session, or make the first game night all about character creation. If you can get your players to do it in advance, it will be a lot easier for you to tailor your first adventure to the capabilities of your party. And, if that's just not possible, have a really simple fight or something worked out for the first night after your character generation – it's important that your players get excited and interested on the first session. That way they'll be a lot keener to make the commitment to turn up regularly, week in, week out.

Whichever way you've handled character generation, your first adventure shouldn't be anything too complicated. Just stack them up against some bad guys, make sure there's a tangible reward for their efforts, and maybe drop a few clues as to what will happen in the future. Don't try to recreate the plot to the *Maltese Falcon*

HOW DID IT GO? If this feature inspires you to become a referee, let us know about it. Write to us at the usual **arcane** address or e-mail arcane@futurenet.co.uk We'd love to hear from you.

WE CAN HELP **arcane**'s had loads of useful features that'll help you out once you've got started. Try reading Worldbuilder (in three parts, **arcane** 1-3), Trick or Cheat (**arcane** 3), War Baby (**arcane** 5), Tales of Terror (**arcane** 7) and The Power and The Glory (**arcane** 12). Turn to page 53 for back issue details.

Players from Hell

(And how to deal with them.)

Hopefully it won't happen on your very first night, but sooner or later you're going to come across some difficult players. Here are three you might recognise, together with some ideas on how to deal with them.

1: The rules lawyer

Most likely to say: "Actually, I think you'll find that on page 76 of the Player's Guide it clearly states that Paladins are immune to diseases of all kinds, so I don't think I *have* caught a cold in fact."

Rules lawyers are the players who know the rules of the game better than you do. They like nothing better than to spend large quantities of their spare time reading rules systems from beginning to end. Of course you'd probably like to as well, but you've got to design this week's adventure too, right? And they are tricky to deal with. Some good can be done by recruiting them to be your assistant, and getting them to look up rulings for you, but in the end you'll have to either say: "You're quite right, excuse me," or "It's my game, and if I say it's happened that way, it has." The trick is not to become annoyed and overreact. Just take it all calmly in your stride. You are the referee, after all, and during your game, you are the person who decides on the application of rules.

2: The dark horse

Most likely to say: Nothing at all.

Some people tend to stay out of things a bit, and you may find that you have a player on your hands who doesn't seem to be really taking part in your game. There are plenty of tactics you can employ to try to draw them in – make sure there are tasks that only their character can satisfactorily accomplish, for example – but it's worth bearing in mind that some people enjoy taking a bit of a back seat and letting others talk loudly. Have a quiet word with your dark horse and find out if they'd like to be more involved, and if they would, do something about it.

3: The power gamer

Most likely to say: "A mere battalion of Space Marines? I've been saving my Qvantox X7HSS laser grenade for just such an occasion."

Some players see RPGs as a competition to get as powerful a character as they can. Some of them will even bend the rules a bit to do it. There are many ways to deal with this sort of player from the low-key approach of having a word and asking them not to do it, to the more heavy-handed approach of denying them some of their power. That Qvantox X7HSS laser grenade, for instance, may turn out to be a dud, if you decide it is. Don't try to compensate by making the other player characters tougher, that might backfire on you as the power gamer gets his hands on things you'd rather he didn't have. It's also worth asking yourself if you're the one who's having a problem. Giving away power can be like giving children too many Christmas presents – you'll enjoy it at the time, but later you might find you've spoiled them. Maybe you just need to be more cautious with the rewards you're giving. If you're unfortunate to have a power gamer who's also a rules lawyer playing in your game, then just shoot them. It's the kindest thing.

on your first ever adventure. Even if it all seems clear to you, you can be sure that your players will get easily confused.

It's probably also a good idea to invest in a diary before the first adventure. It won't be long before your players are setting off things that will have an effect in the future – even something as simple as ordering a suit of armour or a cybernetic implant – and it's going to be important that you keep track of how time is moving in the game. A diary is far and away the easiest way to do this.

Another good thing to have is an index card box. You know, one of those little plastic boxes that you keep cards in, subdivided alphabetically. You can use these cards to keep track of just about everything, especially non-player characters, and they're really easy to access during play. Best of all, if you make up an NPC on the spot you can just write their name down on a card and flesh out the details of their character during your next weekly preparation slot.

You should also have decided by now whether or not you want to use miniatures to represent your players' characters and the opposition they meet. This decision is very much a matter of personal preference and I'm not going to try to influence you one way or the other. Basically, a game which uses figures can be easier to keep track of, and they're useful if you're using a very precise combat system that demands to know distances all the time.

On the other hand, figures can limit the imagination of some people, and you may just find them an unnecessary expense. I like to use some sort of indication of who's where and doing what, especially in large-scale combats, but I also like to have plenty of sessions where the figures never make it out of the box. If you are going to use figures, make sure that you've got all the ones needed sorted out before the game – you don't want a hiatus in play while you rifle through your collection. You should also have some squared paper ready to quickly sketch out locations for the figures, and you may even find this a handy idea even if you don't use them. It's amazing the amount of information that even a very quickly – or in my case poorly – sketched out location can give to your players.

So now, with your first session looming, it's time to make sure that you've got everything you need ready. It may seem blindingly obvious, but make sure that you take some pens and paper, some dice (of the appropriate type for your system), that you've prepared any player handouts you might need in the first session (maps of the local area, for instance) and that you've got your first adventure ready to play.

The first session

The big moment. You've finally got everybody together, you're as prepared as you'll ever be and it's time to get things going. It's a good idea to have something for your players to do straight away. Don't worry too much about explaining rules and stuff before you get going... it'll be more fun for them if you plough straight in and kick some butt. Explain any necessary rules as you go along. And make sure that there's plenty of 'space' left in your first adventure, don't aim to keep them playing solidly all night by giving them a series of tasks to complete. Let the players have some time when not much seems to be going on. Time when they can learn about each other and start the in-group interaction that's a vital part of any fun gaming experience.

And always remember: keep 'em wanting more. Don't give too much away on the first night – let the players learn what you have in store for them when it comes to get them and not before.

Something else to bear in mind on the first night is that you shouldn't be at all worried about making the odd mistake – it's your first time, right? It's only natural that the odd error will creep in – just be honest enough to admit to it, and make as sure as you can that you don't do it again. But equally, don't be bullied by your players into reversing your decisions. There are bound to be times when you make decisions they wouldn't, but if you buckle to any pressure to change what you've done you'll set an unfortunate precedent and ultimately the game will stop being as challenging and fun for everybody concerned.

Keeping it going

Now that you've had your first session, it's time to get organised, copy up all the notes you made and plan your next game night. When you're planning, always take care to think about how the skills of every character can be involved. It's no good just having fight after fight, the thief in the party's going to get pretty bored. And use all sorts of media for inspiration to get you thinking about what to run next week. Read **arcane** and take notice of all the useful things in there, from the monthly encounters (always a good starting point for a game) to the regular features on exciting new ways to roleplay. And watch *Star Trek*, or *Highlander*, or *Robocop* on the telly and make a note of any good ideas you see there. And when you're reading and you come across an unusual idea, note it down and think about how you can turn it into a scenario.

You'll soon find that all this becomes second nature, and – whaddya know – you've made it as a referee.

FINDING ROLEPLAYERS

If you don't have a group of friends who are interested in roleplaying there are lots of ways to go about finding one. Try putting up a notice at school, at work or in your local gaming shop. And if that doesn't work, phone TSR (UK) on 01223 212517 and ask about the RPGA, which helps to put people in touch with each other.

GO WITH THE FLOW

Refereeing, for all it has to offer, can still be an extremely demanding task. But there are many ways to make things easier for yourself. ***Andy Butcher*** *describes one of his favourites...*

Get organised

For many of us, organisation is something of a 12-letter word. Roleplaying is all about excitement, adventure and imagination, and no-one likes to dwell too much on the less inspiring elements of the referee's job. But, as we've explained in our 'Take the Plunge' feature starting on page 24, being organised is a vital part of being a referee. Not only do your players rely on you to know what's going on at any given point during a game, but you also have to know what's already happened and, most importantly, what's *going* to happen next.

Far too often the atmosphere and excitement of a roleplaying session is ruined when the poor over-worked ref has to pause the proceedings to look something up. Unfortunately, there's no single technique that will guarantee your games run smoothly. Simply being familiar with the rules and the adventure is not always enough, especially when you're running a complex, non-linear scenario. Perhaps the toughest of all are the investigative adventures common to *Call of Cthulhu*, *Don't Look Back* and other such games.

It's not just running these kinds of games that's hard, either. Designing a good, non-linear adventure is a real skill. It's all too easy to get swamped by your own imagination and end up with an unwieldy monster which collapses around your ears during play when the characters get stuck.

As with running games, unfortunately there isn't any sure-fire method for writing a good scenario either. But there's a simple organisational technique that can really help in both cases – the humble flowchart.

The first and last time flowcharts entered your life was probably during some exceptionally dull chemistry class at school or college, or during an equally dull training course at work. But flowcharts can be one of the most useful tools for any referee.

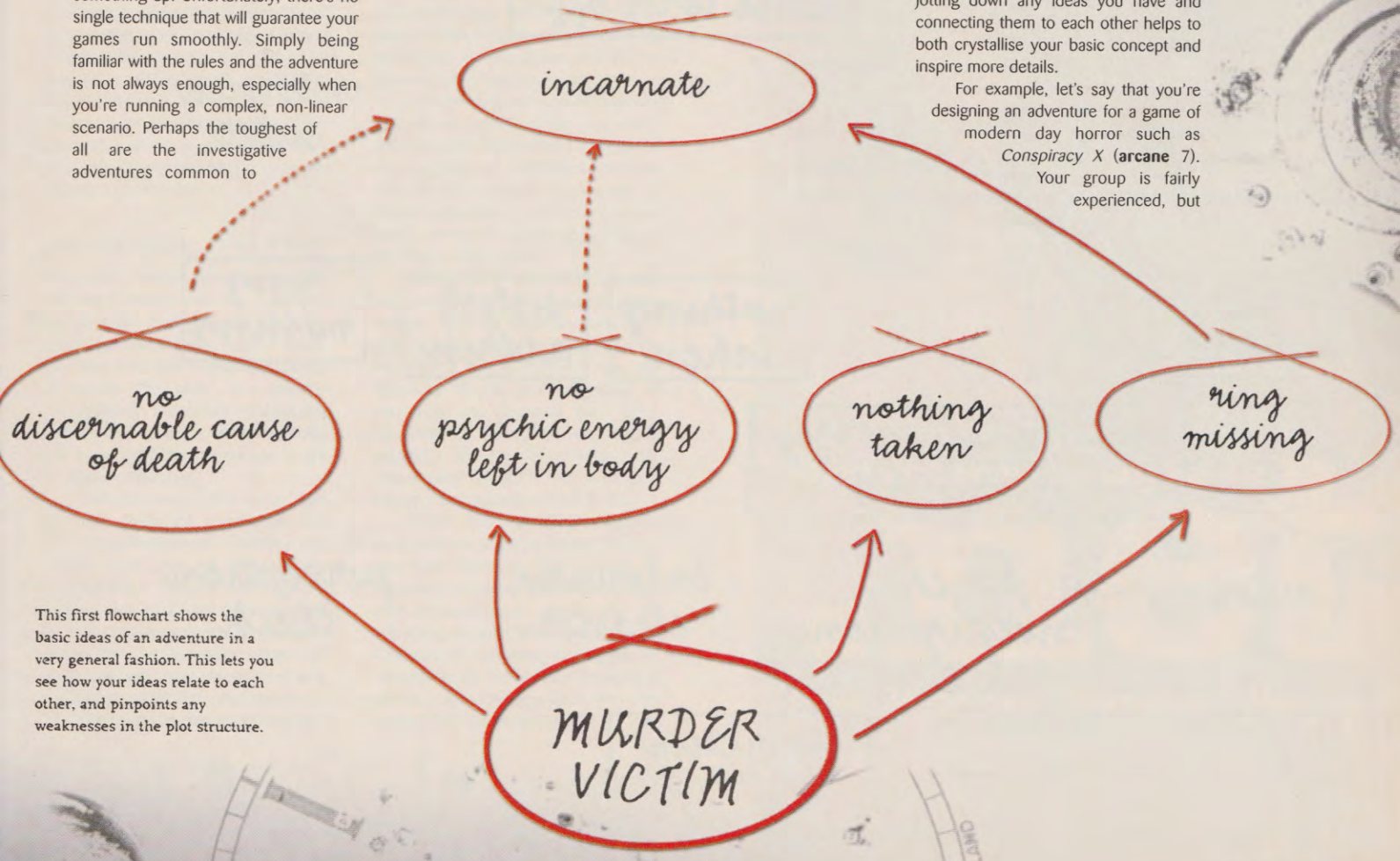
The key to flowcharts is their ability to present complex relationships in a simple to follow, visual manner. Not only is this very handy when you're planning out an adventure, but it also enables you to summarise the key elements of almost any plot on a single page – allowing you to keep track of things at a glance.

ADAPT 'EM AS YOU GO... Yet another advantage of flowcharts over writing an adventure out in long-hand is the ease with which you can modify them in play. If the players come up with a connection you hadn't thought of, you can simply sketch it in to remind yourself.

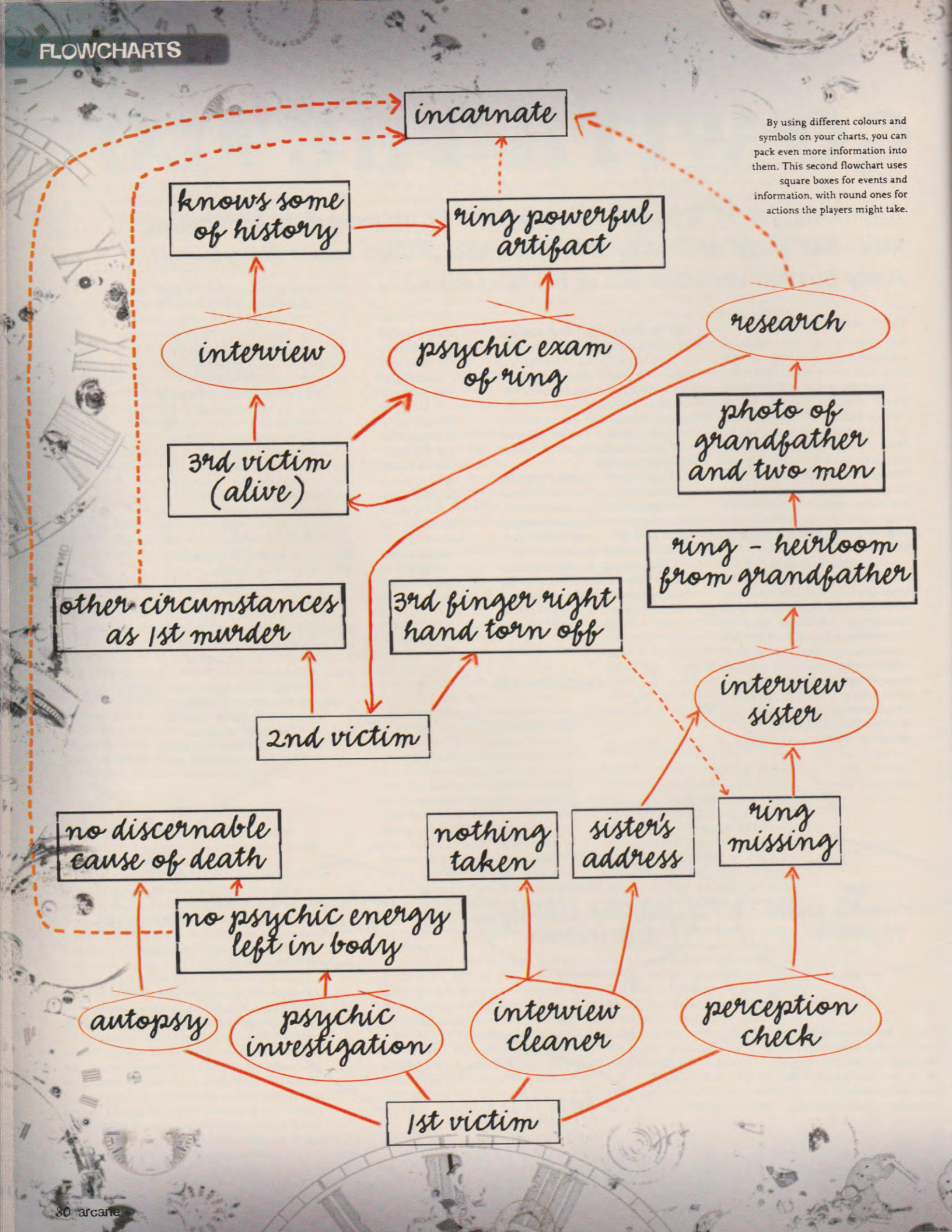
Plan for success

When you're designing an adventure for your group, using flowcharts offers several advantages over either writing everything out long-hand or trying to work everything out in your head. Simply jotting down any ideas you have and connecting them to each other helps to both crystallise your basic concept and inspire more details.

For example, let's say that you're designing an adventure for a game of modern day horror such as *Conspiracy X* (**arcane** 7). Your group is fairly experienced, but



This first flowchart shows the basic ideas of an adventure in a very general fashion. This lets you see how your ideas relate to each other, and pinpoints any weaknesses in the plot structure.



By using different colours and symbols on your charts, you can pack even more information into them. This second flowchart uses square boxes for events and information, with round ones for actions the players might take.

so far the campaign has concentrated on aliens and UFOs. You decide that in order to keep the players on their toes it's about time they came up against a supernatural force. For a while now you've been toying with the idea of an incarnate (a human twisted by psychic energy) who believes he can 'devour' spirits and gain their powers and abilities – so there's your bad guy. Murders are always a good way to get players involved in a plot, and two of the characters are law enforcement types, so you decide to kick things off with a murder. Finally, you need a link – a reason for the incarnate to kill his unfortunate, hapless victim.

What if the victim's grandfather was a psychic, and used his powers to trap and bind a powerful evil spirit? The incarnate has learned of the spirit's location, but needs to break the binding before he can devour it and gain its power. So you decide that the binding can only be broken with the talisman used to create it, a ring that has become a family heirloom. That's what the incarnate wants, and why he kills the victim. Sketching this down as a simple, easy-to-read flowchart makes the beginning of the adventure look like flowchart 1 – see page 29.

Looking at this, there's obviously a lot more work to be done. The only solid link between the murder and the incarnate is the missing ring. Unless you make it obvious to the players that a ring is missing, the adventure's going to stall right at the start, especially because there's nothing weird about the killing yet. As a rule of thumb, you should always make sure that there are at least two routes for the players to follow from any main event in an adventure, and at least one of them shouldn't rely on any specific rolls being made.

Provoking interest

After some thought, then, you decide that the incarnate used his powers to consume the victim's spirit. As such, there's no discernible cause of death, and the victim's face is drawn in a scream of horror and pain. Any psychic investigation by the players will show that there's simply nothing left but a husk. That should definitely be enough to get the player's interested.

You also decide that rather than one ring, there are three. The first victim's grandfather was a member of a magical order. The evil spirit was so powerful that it took the leaders of the order to bind it. The incarnate needs all three rings to gain access to the spirit, and so there are two more victims out there. You can make the missing ring hard to spot on the first victim (maybe he has a tan, and the players must notice the mark where the ring was removed) and easier to spot on the second victim (the ring was stuck, and so the incarnate simply ripped off the whole finger).

Finally, in case the players are really dense, you make the third victim a weak psychic – he dreams of the other two murders and has some inkling of his ring's power. Fearing for his life, he contacts the players and tells them that he's convinced the rings are the reason for the killing.

Sketching this out and adding some more details, you end up with something like flowchart 2 – see left. Now things are beginning to take shape. There's still work to be done here on the second half of the adventure, but it should be obvious now how using flowcharts helps to keep things organised, and enables you to spot weaknesses in the plot. Once you get used to planning out adventures this way, you'll often find that the finished chart is all you need to run the game – which is a lot easier to deal with than pages of detailed description or a random list of notes.

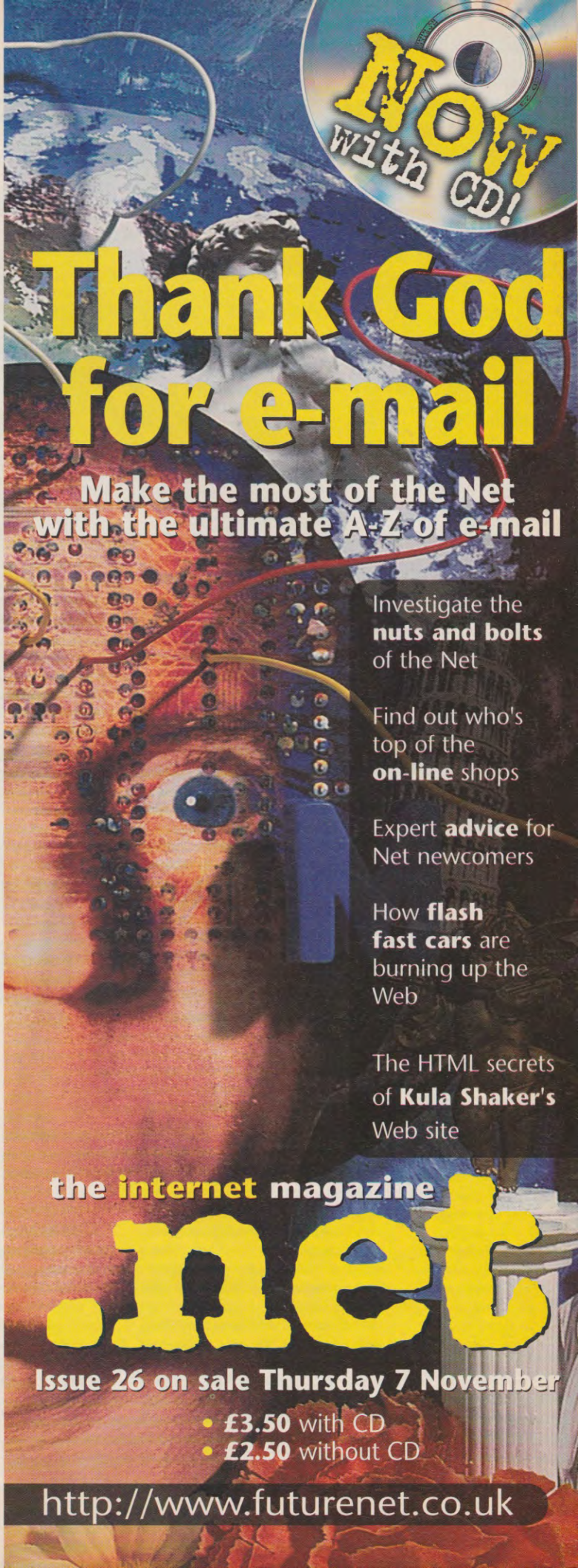
On the run

For exactly the same reason, flowcharts are also useful when you're playing the game. All but the most complex adventures can be summarised on a single page of paper, making it easy to keep track of events. As the players work their way through the adventure, you can mark off their progress on the flowchart, so you can see at a glance what they've done and what they haven't.

This technique can be of particular use with an adventure that you didn't write yourself. Charting the course of the plot is a great way to familiarise yourself with it. You can also mark page or chapter references on the chart so you know where to find the relevant information during play.

Charting the adventure can also help you spot potential problems ahead of time – look out for bottlenecks in the chart, which tend to be a danger sign. As you may of noticed, you can also use flowcharts to plot the progression of events in an adventure over time. Flowchart 2 (see left) is roughly organised by days, for example, with time moving forward as you work your way up the chart from bottom to top.

If you find that using flowcharts works with the way you referee, you can even use them to plan groups of scenarios or whole campaigns. They offer a quick and simple way of organising complex plots and schemes with multiple outcomes, freeing you to concentrate on the fun parts of being a referee, such as telling a good story and creating the right atmosphere.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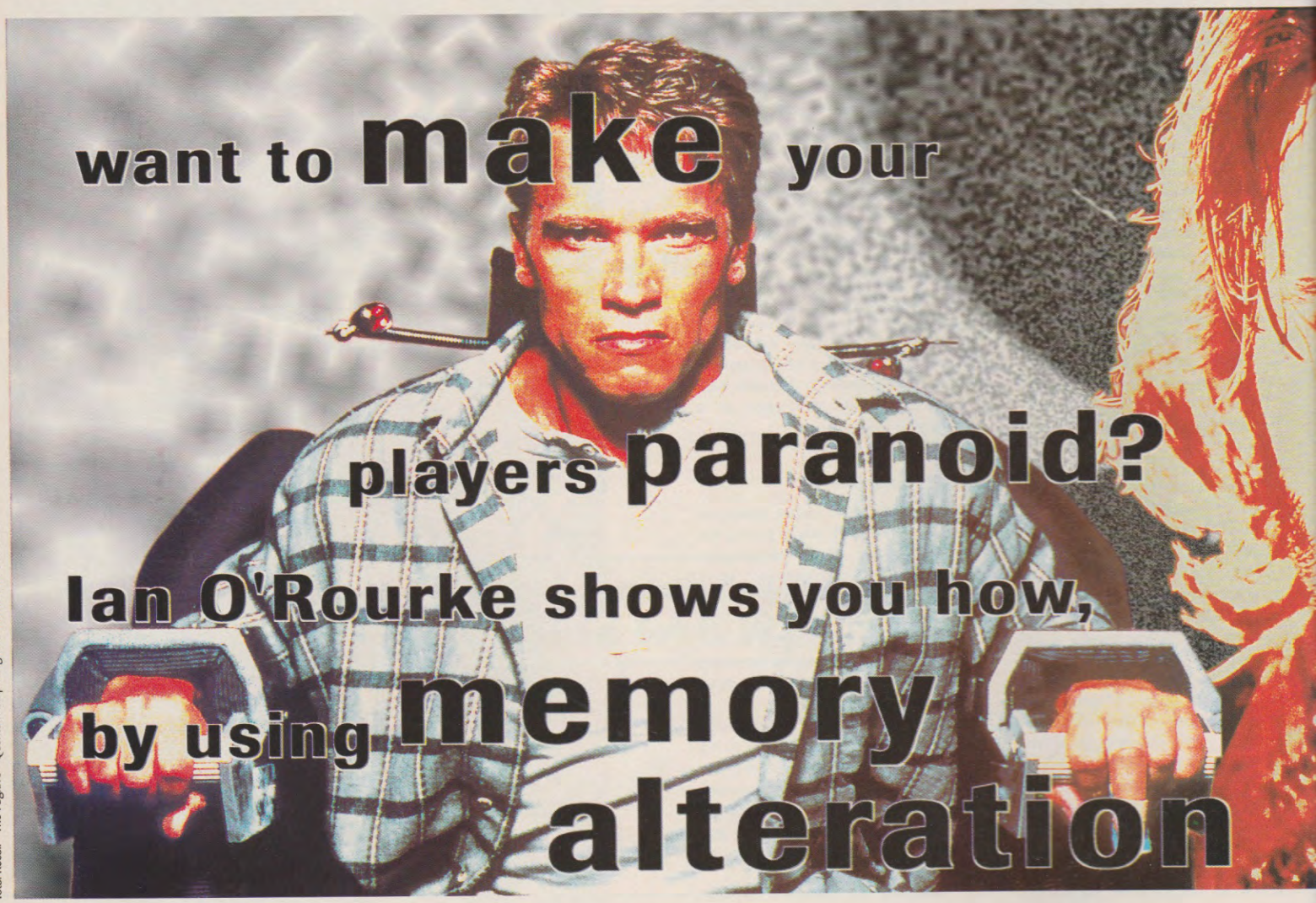


want to make your players paranoid? Ian O'Rourke shows you how, by using memory alteration

Total Recall - The Fugitive - Quantum Leap images © moviestore collection

TALKING FILM

Total Recall, *Strange Days* and *The Fugitive*: three films which have used the concept of memory loss to create paranoia in the central characters.

Surely dreams are private...

We like to think that our memory is perfect, and apart from a few lapses, pretty immutable. We want to believe that what we remember is what happened and we can rely on that. We also treasure the fact that dreams are private, and can only be discovered by others through our willingness to discuss them. Dreams are a theatre for us to express our innermost desires and fears, and as such are often highly personal.

But what if dreams and memories were no longer the province of the individual but could be manipulated, wiped and suppressed by outside sources? How exactly could the concepts of memory and dream invasion be used in stories or even as the basis for an entire campaign? Read on for plenty of suggestions and ideas...

Mutable memory

An individual's memories can be wiped or altered, and an alteration could be as small as changing someone's name or as vast as total memory reconstruction. The mind wipe is the most direct because if no replacement memory is used the victim will have an obvious blank spot. He or she will certainly want to know what happened. The memory wipe can be as significant as you wish. It could be something small (if not unimportant), such as a murder the victim witnessed, or it could hide events that have epic consequences for the universe.

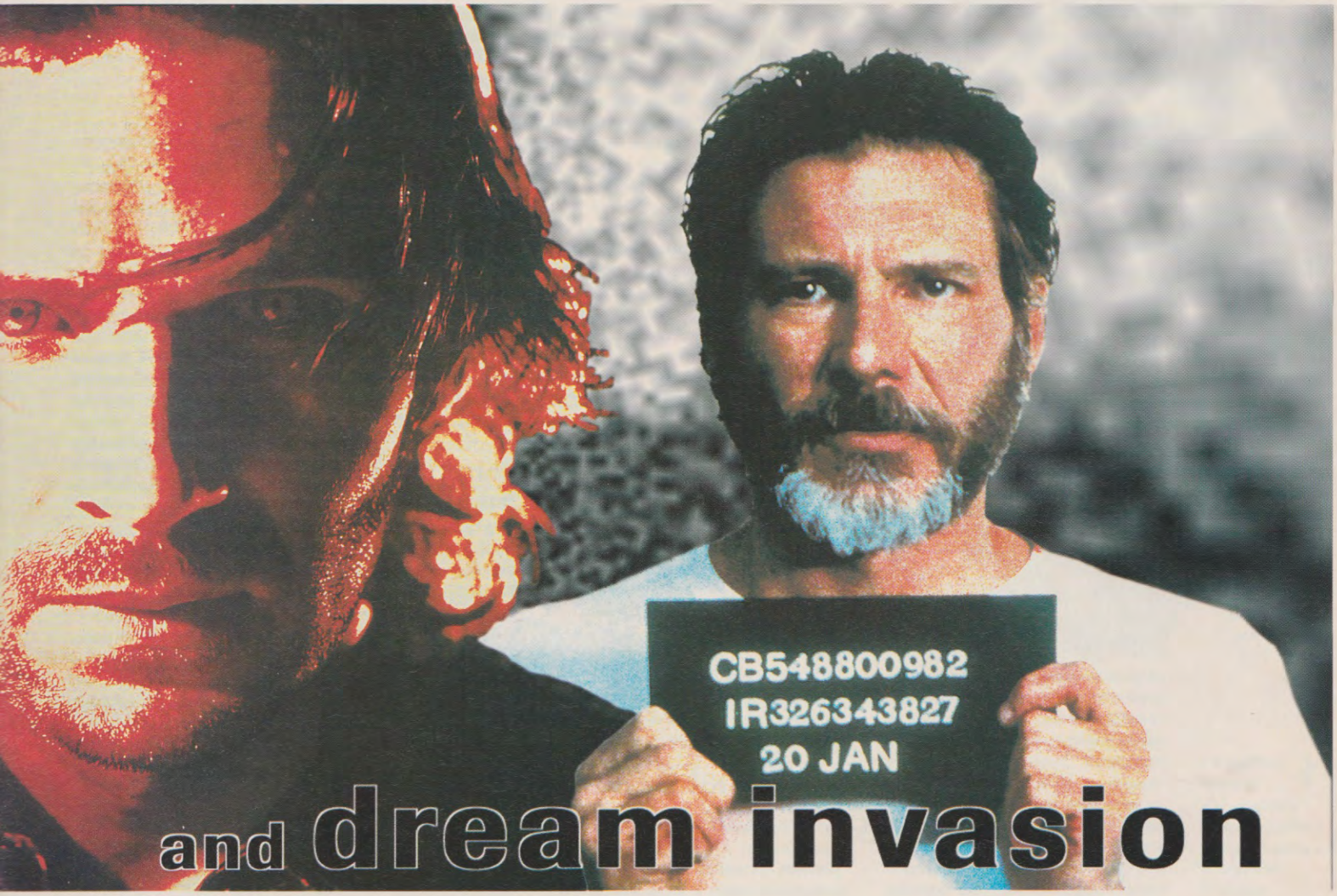
Altered and implanted memories can be very similar, because if a memory is altered so much beyond its original format then it could be termed a memory implant. This is illustrated in the 'Total Recall' and 'The Novels of Dean Koontz' boxes (on pages 34 and 35 respectively). In 'Total Recall' we are dealing with a memory implant – the life of Douglas Quaid is totally false, he was a secret agent on Mars working for a dictatorship, not a lowly construction worker in a cosy marriage living a simple, happy life. In the novel called *Strangers* (see 'The Novels of Dean Koontz'), we have a memory alteration. The characters in the book did stay at the motel on those dates; the memory alteration actually supports and is aided by the fact that they stayed at the motel, but the events that occurred during their stay were vastly different to the memory they are left with after interference. Fact has been mixed with fiction. It can be seen from this second example that a victim may well live for years without knowing that portions of his memory are constructions.

It is quite easy to introduce a memory plot, and they have great dramatic impact. You could start a story with the characters waking from

WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW...

It can be quite difficult, of course, for players to 'forget' something which their characters have already discovered, so it's best to make sure that the elements of their memory that characters lose are those which the players haven't roleplayed.

OF THE MIND



and dream invasion

unconsciousness in a strange place having been subjected to a memory wipe. The characters would then have to follow clues back to discover what happened to them and why, and thus to the conclusion of the story. The scary part? All the way through the story the characters would be interacting with people who may already know them, and who may be part of the conspiracy that resulted in the memory wipe. This could be taken a step further, with the characters starting a campaign, rather than one story, waking up in a strange place suffering from acute amnesia – the campaign would involve them trying to find out exactly who they are, who wiped their memory and why. It would be like a combination of *Nowhere Man*, *The Prisoner* and *The Fugitive* all rolled into one adventure. The disadvantage is that the players cannot really create characters because they will know absolutely nothing about their backgrounds (remember they start the scenario with amnesia), only their skills, physical attributes and appearance.

"What if dreams and memories could be manipulated, wiped and suppressed?"

When running a plot involving altered memory it's best to leave the player ignorant of his or her character's memory problems. This can be done by utilising the blank spots a player leaves in his background. The events in *Strangers* (see 'The Novels of Dean Koontz' box on page 35) provide a good example – no player would bother to detail two boring days in a motel. This allows you to fill in areas of a character's background with a false memory, and then put that false memory in the character's history via in-game interaction. When sufficient time has passed the character can start suffering from 'fugue' states (see page 34). He will hopefully have forgotten about those little background details you filled in by this point. You could make an altered memory a pivotal point in the character's background, but you should be sure the player would embrace the roleplaying opportunity rather than be annoyed at you arbitrarily screwing with his background.

Losing time

If you are going to use a memory alteration plot, you should not miss out on the chance for a good dose of fear and tension – an essential ingredient of

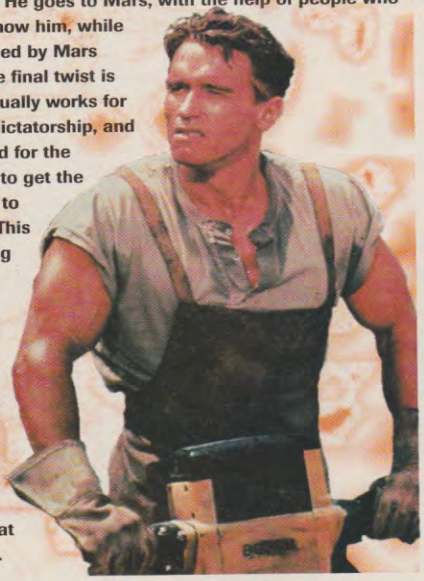
MULTIPLE USE

The use of memory wipes and dream invasion is obviously of use to refs using the following systems: *Conspiracy X*, *Over the Edge*, *Don't Look Back* and all the cyberpunk games. The concepts can be used in any game, though – even fantasy games can have a mythical Morpheus and his bizarre cult of dream sorcerers.

Total Recall

A film which uses the idea of memory being mutable is *Total Recall.* The plot centres around Douglas Quaid, a construction worker, happily married, who is obsessed with Mars. He is so obsessed he wants to visit the red planet, but it is currently in civil war as the resistance fights against an evil dictatorship. Quaid visits Recall Inc, a company that will implant memories of a holiday into your mind. But while the technicians are preparing him for his fantasy trip, they damage a memory cap, and everything spirals out of control.

Quaid soon discovers he is actually Houser, a secret agent for the Mars dictatorship who defected to the resistance. He goes to Mars, with the help of people who say they know him, while being chased by Mars agents. The final twist is that he actually works for the Mars dictatorship, and volunteered for the procedure to get the resistance to trust him. This is assuming the film is not just Quaid playing out the holiday as a secret agent which is what he asked for at Recall Inc.



all great stories. The source of the fear centres on the paranoia that comes from knowing that an area of the victim's memory is false. The paranoia can be heightened by first using various symptoms of a memory alteration revealing itself, and then by sweeping the victim into the conspiracy surrounding the events he cannot remember.

The characters in the Dean Koontz novel *Strangers* (see the box opposite) begin to exhibit symptoms caused by the breakdown of their memory alteration; the two main characters suffer 'fugue' states and bouts of sleepwalking.

A fugue state is a recognised psychological state and is commonly referred to as losing time. The individual will enter the fugue, at which point the memory of the sufferer will stop, only to come out of the fugue some time later, at which time memory will restart. The fugue can be seconds or hours long and, for fictional purposes, the actions performed during the fugue could include anything, even murder. In *Strangers,* the fugues were triggered by objects relating to the characters' true memories, items such as black gloves and motorcycle helmets – these pointed to the NBC suits worn by the government UFO interception agents. While in the fugue the character would run, and find herself hiding some minutes later, but there is nothing stopping your unfortunate victim posting letters in his or her fugue state, or ringing people who have been altered out of memory.

The idea of complicated actions being performed during lost time was explored in *Strangers,* but it was the character suffering from sleepwalking who performed them. While sleepwalking the character would repeatedly type paranoid messages on his computer, or find himself waking up in a highly secure hiding place having nailed all his windows shut. These methods can be used in a campaign to bring an element of tension and fear into your sessions. This will then warn the character that something is wrong and he or she will seek help.

Once a character seeks help, he risks alerting those who altered his memory. It's then time to pick up the pace and have the character start meeting people who swear they know him. He could be contacted by someone else who has blown through his memory alteration by hypnosis, only to see that person assassinated before they can talk. He could start to receive mail from a good guy within the conspiracy showing pictures of the places and people that have been altered out of his memory. The point of all this is to heighten the character's awareness that behind the altered memory (which he may or may not have discovered yet) is a sequence of events that people will kill for, and he does not know who these people are. The paranoia should provide the fear.

Food for Thought

One supernatural phenomena which is supported in some works of fiction is the idea that an individual can ingest a person's memories and thoughts by eating their brains. If this is true then a whole cult or secret society could be constructed around the concept. If we also use the supernatural premise that cannibalism somehow instills a form of immortality, then the cult could be ruled by a quorum of individuals who are immortal and who live to ingest the brains of great men, thus making them some of the greatest minds in existence. They would be extremely dangerous because of their enormous knowledge, and this would be an interesting twist to the usual David Koresh-style cult, and a great enemy for horror and conspiracy-orientated campaigns.

Past Lives

Past lives are currently topical – everyone seems to have lived in the past as Napoleon, so it's no wonder the diminutive guy was mad with all those minds inside him. The idea of past lives is a separate phenomena to memory wipes, but they can also be used in memory alteration stories.

If you make past lives more mundane and allow a character to start exhibiting memories of a past life, it's possible for these memories to have an effect on the character's current life. What if the character's past life ended in a calculated and vicious murder, and his murderer is still alive? What if the character made a great discovery in a past life? Will other individuals want the secret behind the discovery to be revealed, or have people suppressed the discovery and are now greatly interested in how it has been rediscovered?

A more surreal option, and admittedly one that would be hard to implement, is the idea of the past life actually being the character's real life, while what he thought was his life is a combination of altered and implanted memories, as in *Total Recall.* What would happen when the victim finds out that the wife, kids and events in the past life are actually true memories, and that they were all killed by his controllers to fabricate his new life?

Impressions of a Time Past

One theory offered by parapsychologists for the nature of ghosts is that historical events can be stored in the walls, furniture and scenery of a location. This creates an impression of historical events, which is a form of memory. If characters could locate these impressions it would provide an interesting way of revealing clues and progressing plots. It undoubtedly beats the more traditional dropped notes, business cards or careless diary entries often used for the same effect.

Memory impressions could be used to enable people to interact with the dead, though this demands a slight leap of faith because you are now assuming

"What if the character's past life ended in murder, and his murderer is still alive?"

BABYLON 5
Another example of an excellent memory-orientated plot can be found in *Babylon 5.* Commander Sinclair had an area wiped out of his memory during his time on a Minbari Cruiser during the last defence of Earth. What was discovered by the Minbari during Sinclair's time on the cruiser had epic consequences for the past, present and future.

MEDDLING WITH YOUR MIND
One of the better authors who has used memory loss and mental illness resulting in memory loss is Christopher Priest. For some really thrilling fiction, check out *The Glamour, The Affirmation, A Dream of Wessex* and *The Quiet Woman.*

GEMS AND HEAVY METAL
Although it looks pretty dated now, *Sapphire and Steel* provides some fantastic inspiration for roleplaying scenarios. Look out for the videos which are on sale in major video stores.

any individuals in the memory have some sort of awareness, rather than being a static recording. Being even more extravagant, the players could take the roles of the characters in the impression and play through the past events, therefore enriching their understanding of the historical drama.

This idea is explored in the TV series *Sapphire and Steel,* where the phenomena are ripples and breaks in the time continuum. The two main characters interact, witness and solve all manner of events in the past that are localised. This could be the same with memory impressions, which could possibly hold an evil intelligence or powerful, angry minds.

Ephemeral images

While we sleep we dream, even if you cannot remember any of this nocturnal imagery. Dreams are a doorway into the subconscious mind as it invades the conscious mind during sleep. As a result, dreams are often representations of our greatest fears and desires – a sort of subconscious release valve. But what would happen if it became possible for people to invade our dreams?

The ability to invade and alter people's dreams could have many benevolent uses, such as the curing of mental disorders or as a way of easing insomnia. However, this power could so easily be abused. The film *Dreamscape* explores this idea, because it relates the story of two psychics involved in a dream invasion project. The bizarre project starts as a benevolent way of curing various mind disorders, but one psychic soon explores the potential for assassination, with inevitable, not to mention disastrous consequences.

If dreams are linked to the fragile human subconscious it's easy to theorise that dream manipulators could corrupt individuals via dream imagery, possibly causing normal individuals to rape and murder. This could be the aim of a morally corrupt cult which has individuals, possibly psychics, who can enter dreams and interact with vast dream realms and their denizens.

If dreams were suppressed, what would be the result? This was explored in an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* called *Night Terrors* – an anomaly stopped the crew dreaming and this resulted in the crew becoming highly paranoid. Had the problem not been solved, the crew would have become paranoid to the extent that they would have killed each other due to having no psychological release valve. In a more contemporary game a remote town could be subjected to dream suppression, resulting in it becoming an epicentre of violence.

The memory trade

If the chosen method of dream and memory invasion in your campaign is suitably commercial, then numerous new implications come into play. The demand for other peoples' thoughts and memories would be high, because it would allow people to be anyone and possibly anything. Those rich enough could have memories of being an astronaut, model or rock star. The people with these memories could sell them at a premium, just like selling your life story to a film studio. In time, it would become possible to create false memories, and companies would then be able to offer fake holiday implants as in *Total Recall.*

Not all the uses would be harmless entertainment. In the film *Strange Days,* it's possible for people's experiences to be recorded so others can immerse themselves and experience the memory exactly like the original person. In the film, this included the memory of a woman being raped. A very sick trade could easily spring from this concept, even worse than modern pornography.

Methods of invasion

The methods of invading memories and dreams boil down to four different types: Magic, Technology, Psychic Powers, Drugs or a combination of one or more of these. The availability of the method(s) can be controlled by making the drugs hard to find, the magic ritual taking hours to perform, or the dream reading technology part of a secret research lab. The opposite is also true, because you could allow the invasion of peoples' memory and dreams to become more widespread by making the drug common, the machinery only a small chip and the spell quick to cast. It is important to choose the method that matches your story or campaign goal so that you do not lose control of the concept you have used.

And finally...

The main reason to use memory and dream invasion in your campaign is because it's something beyond the norm. If you can create a campaign or a sequence of adventures where the players start to really feel the paranoia inherent in not being able to trust their character's memory, then an interesting experience should be had by all.

quantum dreaming

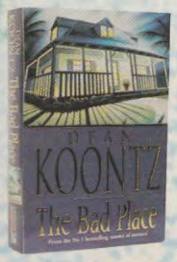
One explanation for people having fantastically detailed historical dreams could be because they are real. They could be experiencing a form of psychic time travel, as illustrated by the TV show *Quantum Leap.* Even though Sam Beckett was sent back in time via a machine, the mechanics of time travel in the show are close to how time travelling in a dream might work.

While the characters are asleep, they project their consciousness back into the body of individuals native to that period. The characters, such as Sam Beckett, could enter the body of anyone – knight, nobleman, peasant or king's fool. As the campaign progresses characters may encounter evil travellers, or ways of inducing the travelling state on demand. A few rules will need to be created for the nature of the possession, such as what skills are remembered from the combined minds. Anyone interested in this concept should watch *Quantum Leap* and read the 'Tinkering with Time' feature in arcane 7, as well as taking a look at *GURPS Time Travel.*

What about the *X-Files*?

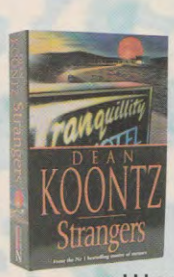
Who could forget the *X-Files* and its constant reference to memory problems? Many of the episodes which follow the central alien invasion plot have had Mulder and Skully losing track of time in some manner. Check out the various *X-Files* videos which are available for rent.

The novels of Dean Koontz



The novelist Dean Koontz has used memory in several of his novels. These include *Masks, The Bad Place* and, most importantly, *Strangers,* which is about a group of widely different individuals who spend several days at a remote motel. They remember the trip as a boring couple of days watching TV and reading.

However, they had their memories altered, and the novel begins with the memory alteration breaking down some years later. The individuals begin to experience a fascination with a red moon; some remember what they have had suppressed, subsequently committing suicide, and the two main characters



experience fugue states and sleepwalking. Needless to say, the characters slowly discover they have had their memories altered, and they all come together and go back to the motel. At this point they begin to be pro-active rather than re-active. The book is an excellent example of how a memory plot could be used in a roleplaying game.

I Beg You

Language barriers crop up in just about every role alike, but that doesn't mean you should igno

Q Okay, so you come across a bunch of orcs, what do you wanna do?

"Negotiate! If we get into combat again we're surely going to die..."

Ah, so you approach the orcs and say what?

"Er, let us pass for we mean you and your fellows no harm."

The orcs look at you, heads slightly tilted, and then one says:

"Ug bug."

Say what? Ug bug? What the hell is that supposed to mean? Why don't the orcs reply in Common and the negotiation process continue? It's pretty usual for all referees to assume that when the characters meet up with monsters and other NPCs, they can all get along splendidly in the communications stakes – especially if the monsters in question are humanoid. And yet, as is quite clearly stated in the *AD&D Dungeon Master's Guide* (and in numerous other rulebooks for the multitude of games out there), characters shouldn't be able to speak to NPCs unless they share a common language (and that doesn't necessarily mean the Common Trade tongue which many human nationalities share).

Enforcing language rules within games not only makes a huge amount of common sense – just how could a character speak fluently with an orc if they don't share a language? – but it can make for amusing, fun roleplaying. Of course, there are a number of dangers of which you should be aware, and a number of ways of circumnavigating these potential problems. There's no fun to be had in a game where there's virtually no communication between players and NPCs (or even players and other players, as would be the case in campaigns which are pre-Stone Age). And, what's more, the players will only put up with having to mime out intentions for so long before they agree that they look pretty stupid and go elsewhere to get their gaming thrills.

WATCHING THE BOX

Being able to pull off various accents, to represent different languages, is a skill that's worth developing. Try watching some obscure foreign movies on TV to pick up the sounds of different tongues.

Mother tongue

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and *Star Wars* both actively encourage players to grunt and groan in an animalistic manner. In the case of *Star Wars*, wookie characters can't speak in the human tongue and so players must attempt to signal their intent by grunting appropriately (and then the other characters and NPCs have to make a die roll to see if they can understand, at which point the true spoken words of the wookie are revealed). *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is similar in that when generating characters, players can spend points on various abilities – if they don't spend enough points on being able to speak as humans do, they're penalised with a limited level of speech.

This is a novel approach, and one that works well. Indeed, it's one that can easily be transplanted into other game systems – in other games, why not make an INT check with modifiers when trying to understand someone who's speaking in a foreign or alien language? The modifier should be based on common sense – understanding the general intent of someone speaking Italian is more often than not far easier for another European language-speaking character than understanding someone who's gabbling on in Japanese. Likewise, in a fantasy setting, a character should have more problems understanding an orc, speaking in an orcish tongue, than a fellow human who happens to speak a different national language (in most instances, at least – there are always exceptions to the rule).

Communication skills

Language skills, with varying levels of proficiency, enable characters to interact with others from different countries, races or planets, and constitute a much more realistic way of discerning degrees of understanding than a mere intelligence check. Generally, a successful check against a language skill should result in a greater and more accurate understanding than a

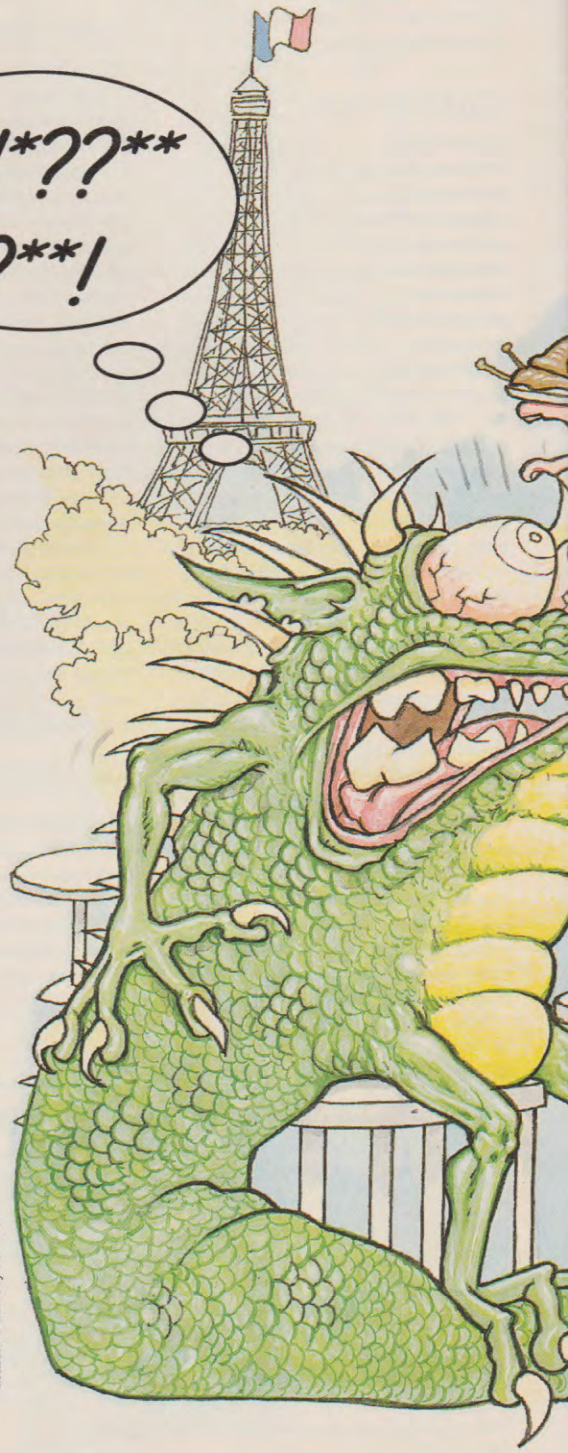


Illustration © arcane by Steve Lillie

R PARDON?

ing game and they're a pain for referee and player
em completely, as **Paul Pettengale** *explains...*

successful INT check – the character's understanding of what has been said should be more or less precise. In making a successful INT roll, the character should only gain a general idea of what is being communicated.

When failure results, the referee can start to have some seriously good fun: "You're pretty sure the orc says you can pass without having to pay the toll fee [snigger]". The most should be made of failed INT or language rolls, with the degree of failure representing the degree of misunderstanding on the part of the player concerned. Consequently, all such rolls should be made in secret – you don't really want the player involved to know whether his character has got it right or not.

Of course, it's often important for the referee to ensure that the characters do understand exactly what's going on – if an NPC is the only source of a vital clue, you must make sure that the PCs manage to communicate with him or her somehow. However, there's no reason why you shouldn't make it pretty difficult for the characters to make this communication possible.

ALREET MEET
Of course, regional variations in a country's language can be just as difficult to understand as another language entirely. Trying to emulate a Somerset accent is great fun (and we come from these 'ere parts).

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

There will undoubtedly come a time when a character is going to try to learn a language, and this is provided for in most rules. However, there are bound to be some languages which player characters simply shouldn't be able to learn because of genetic differences. This is best illustrated yet again by the *Star Wars* game – if wookies can't learn to speak a human language (though they can understand humans), then the reverse should be true.

By preventing player characters from learning to speak selected languages that are spoken in the campaign world, you're given the freedom to use language barriers against them when it suits the adventure.

Likewise, learning languages should be far from easy; just think how difficult it is in real life, and there certainly wouldn't be any easy-learning cassette programmes to help you out in a fantastical world. Characters, as with any type of training, will first have to find themselves a tutor, and this will be a particularly difficult task if the language is an obscure one ("Just which orc are you going to persuade to spend the next three months teaching you his native language then, eh?").

In far-future worlds it might be a much easier affair – an entire language could be flooded into a character's brain direct, through a neural jack or some similar type of technology. However, where are the players going to get the software which teaches them the language of a strange alien race that has just invaded their planet? Again, you place barriers in the characters' way to learning a language even in science fiction games.

TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES

If you're constantly presenting the characters with communication problems, they're eventually going to come to the conclusion that they need some kind of device, magical or otherwise, which does the job of translation for them. There are a number of devices in fiction and fact which can do this, perhaps the most bizarre being the babble fish in Douglas Adams' *Hitch Hiker* series of novels. Iain M Banks used a semi-intelligent secondary skin in his recent *Excession,* and *AD&D* has the Helm of Comprehending Languages and Reading Magic (no less).

These items make the characters' lives just a tad too easy in my mind – they're a cop out, and because roleplaying through the situations that communication misunderstandings can cause is fun, they're ultimately a hindrance to roleplaying. So, I say avoid them, or at least make sure that if they manage to get hold of one of these wondrous items, the characters lose them pretty damn quick, ideally when they're about to enter into negotiation with a foreign-speaking ambassador so they foul up badly.

So language barriers can be more of an aid to decent roleplaying than a hindrance to it. Yes, it's going to make the lives of the PCs that much harder, but that's no bad thing, providing, of course, everyone continues to enjoy themselves. Comprende?

I was a... Live-A Rolep

It was a time of magic. A time of mystery. A time, in fact, of rubber swords and costumed tomfoolery. Simon Cooke donned his scabbard and joined the fracas.

I'd often heard it said that live-action roleplaying is a good laugh. At the very least you get to hit your friends with an assortment of latex weaponry, wander the streets scaring the local inhabitants, and if you are very lucky, you might actually do some proper in-character roleplaying as well. I'd never tried it, mind you – mainly because of a lack of good equipment and willing participants all in the same place at the right time. So when the news filtered through to the **arcane** office that there was a big live action roleplaying (or LARP) event happening in Derby – known as The Gathering, and reportedly the biggest event of its kind in the country, if not the world – I just had to go. Totally unprepared for what lay ahead (I hadn't even rolled my character, nor did I know what choices I had in the matter – I only found out I was going at the very last minute), I borrowed a tent from a friend, a Grim Reaper-style robe from another, and popped to Tesco to buy what I'd been told were the essentials for the weekend: beer, beer, more beer, lots of Mars bars and a pot of Nutella. Feeling confident that this was all I'd need, I dragged myself to the train station and was on my way.

Trainspotting at Derby Central

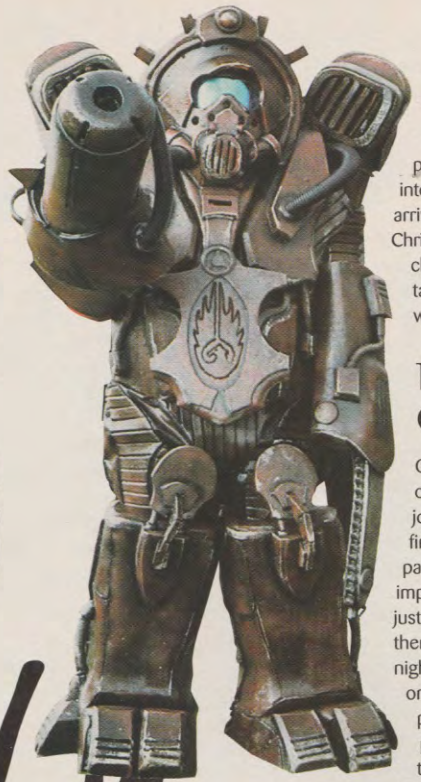
At Locko Park, where the event was being held, I was waved through the pay-on-the-gate queue by whispering the magic words '**arcane** magazine', and then deftly avoided the compulsory weapons check by cunningly not bringing any with me. In the world of The Gathering, there are a number of factions – the Vipers, Bears, Dragons, Gryphons, Harts, Lions and Tarantulas – each of whom own territories in a world vaguely representing medieval Europe. I was with the Vipers, hosts of this year's event, and so with the help of the nearest bystander I set up camp. Then I met up with some friends (Tamsyn and Nathan – Richard would be arriving the next day). We did some scouting around the site and discovered what would form one of the main focal points of the weekend, a large beer tent, known as the Sickspack Inn.

When I finally tracked down and talked with organiser Andy King I found out some rather interesting information. Apparently someone going to a rival event being held just down the road at Drumhill Park (called Renewal) had decided that it'd be a funny jape to steal The Gathering's AA road signs so that people couldn't find their way to the site, presumably in the hope that they'd all go to Renewal instead. Whoever it was failed to even make a dent – rumours indicate that only about 400 people went to Renewal as opposed to more than 4,000 people who came to The Gathering. The other big news was that the Met Office had released a gale warning for that night, and it was set to go straight through the camp site. Oh joy.

Later that night, after Nathan and I spent three hours lost in the Derby ring-road system, searching for somewhere we could buy a torch – leading to an incident with a petrol station attendant offering plentiful advice on why the Colt 45 was useless as a weapon – the rain set in. And boy did it rain. When we got back to the camp, the in-roads had turned into a thick sludge, with Andy King and company ferrying people back and forth through the quagmire in a land-rover. Rather than let this worry us too much, we squidged through on foot to the beer tent.

"I could heal. I could mute people. In fact, I could do a number of funky things with my magical powers."

ACTION LAYING VIRGIN



An eventful night

Sleeping was interesting. At about 3am the gale hit a glancing blow across the camp, though fortunately the worst of it hit the countryside further south. In an episode which would be repeated a number of times over the next few nights, my tent quickly filled with water, completely soaking my sleeping bag. I may not have known what it was like to sleep on a water bed, but now I knew how it would feel to sleep inside one. I woke at 8am to discover that the gale had broken the metal struts of the tent the night before, decided that in the circumstances I didn't need a shower and got into costume. People were already up and about (most with hangovers), and so after a quick breakfast of roast pork with apple sauce in a bun followed by a large coffee, I trekked off to register my character. I was to be an Incanter, whose main purpose in life is to vanquish the undead (such as Chaos warriors), and to form wedges, which is where a number of Incanters get together in a triangular formation and channel their power through one another to ramp up a spell. I could heal. I could mute people. In fact, I could do a whole number of funky things with my magical powers. Incanting was nice and simple – different coloured pieces of paper with various powers of Incantation were carried or worn around the neck on a string, to be torn up after the spell was incanted. With enough power, you could cast any Incantation you wanted, which made for a very flexible system.

After getting Attilla the Nun's signature on my application to the Incanter's guild, and signing up for an hour's duty at the guild per day – having lost my character money over-night, I was forced into slave labour – I wandered the camp in search of people to fight and plots to join. The opening ceremony which soon followed was a great introduction to the events of the previous years, and soon I was getting into the swing of things. Shortly Richard arrived, looking surprisingly like Christopher Lambert in *Highlander* (his character being that of a hippie who'd taken too much acid in the 60s and had woken up in 1096 with the rest of us).

Bizarre Occurrences

On completing a stint of guard duty on the gates to the camp, that night I joined everyone gathering around the fire. Buffalo horns full of beer were passed around (the idea being that it's impossible to put them down, so you just have to keep on drinking or pass them on), and the partying went on all night – in fact, on the last night we kept one going for over 12 hours! At some point during the night, a band of people decided that it'd be great fun to go and moon at everyone's favourite group of enemies – the Drow – over at the Tarantula's camp. Hey, no-one ever said that this LARPing lark couldn't be childish.

Over the course of the next few days, I got involved in all manner of scrapes. Muggings were common-place – the roleplaying equivalent, of course – but fortunately I wasn't the recipient of any. Responsible for one, yes, but it didn't happen to me... I was a juror for the trial of the Violet Mage, also known as the Violent Mage. We let him off – he was accused of the murder of a high-up leader, because he'd resurrected him at one point and decided not to carry on doing so, but we thought that he had the right to do so – but nevertheless he managed to get himself in contempt of court very shortly afterwards!

I hung out with the Goblins and the Rancid Tusks most nights, who were a band of Gobbos and Orks with the most amazing costumes I've seen. Shagnasty (of the Rancid Tusks) and Pukka (of the Goblins) were married, as were Rungo

LARP SOME MORE

There's more in this issue on the subject of live action roleplaying – turn to page 19 where our Soapbox contributor gets quite heated about the hobby's image.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

The Lorien Trust, (organisers of the event) takes its weapons very seriously. There was a weapons check on entry to the event to make sure that the weapons were in good nick, with no protruding edges (there's usually a fibre-glass rod in the middle of most weapons to give them some strength) and no hidden steel rods or fishing wire. There was another check before the main battle – after all, three days of constant fighting can cause a lot of wear and tear. If it wasn't in tip-top condition, you weren't allowed to use it.

In Lorien we trust...

So, you've read the article, salivated over the idea of beating other people up with latex weaponry, and generally decided that you quite fancy sleeping in a sodden sleeping-bag in a tent, in a gale, in a field in Derby for four nights... (honestly, it's not as bad as it sounds! Very character building, in fact). Anyway, if you want to get some more information on The Gathering, you could do a lot worse than send an SAE to those wonderful people at the Lorien Trust, who you can find at: The Lorien Trust, 68 High Street, Eaton Bray, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 2DP. Alternatively, give them a ring on 01525 222884. Oh, and tell them that arcane sent you.

If you want to give live-action roleplaying a try before The Gathering next year, then you should be able to find a group near you. If all else fails, go to your local university and have a look for the roleplaying society on the noticeboard in the student union.

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

One of the keys to successful LARPing is choosing the correct kit – or to be more precise, the correct weapon. There was a plethora of market traders at The Gathering from which all manner of hack and slashery could be bought. Fat ones, thin ones, long ones, skinny ones... All were available for anyone with a wallet that could cope. One of the most impressive I saw (apart from a breathtaking double-headed axe with more pointy bits than a hedgehog after an accident in a pencil-sharpener factory) was a mage's staff with a working plasma ball on top.

and SideSalad (who were both from the Goblins as far as I know), in a hilarious marriage ceremony performed by the leader of the Vipers, King Gustav.

The battle

On the last day, relations had broken down between a number of previously allied factions – a happening which cynics might say was carefully organised by the referees – and there was therefore nothing for it but to prepare for war. All of the Vipers gathered around King Gustav (not only very regal, but it would seem also party animal extraordinaire) and listened closely to the battle plans for the fighting which lay ahead. Tension filled the air as everyone made their way to the battlefield, heavily laden with weapons. Except for the Alchemists Guild, that is – they decided that the middle of the battlefield would make the perfect site for a picnic.

Everybody lined up, allies against enemies, ready to begin dealing death. There were 2,000 people on one side, 2,000 on the other. Copping out from the fighting to take some photographs (you think you'd find me in the middle of that? I might be mad, but I'm not stupid), I stood by the Alchemists and watched as battle commenced.

As if it had been prearranged by the kind of people who steal road signs, at the very moment the fighting started the heavens opened up and rained down more heavily than it had throughout the entire weekend. Undeterred, people fought on in the pouring rain. The ground quickly turned to mud, and it was then that the first major casualty of the weekend happened. Pukka of the Goblins (Micki) was rushed off to hospital with a suspected spinal injury, but fortunately it didn't turn out to be serious and she was sent home later that day. I don't know who won the battle, and to be honest, I don't really think it matters. Everyone picked themselves out of the mud and dried themselves off, and then started packing their things up to go home, slightly sad to be leaving. Tents were unhooked and folded away, and I waved goodbye to my new-found friends.

It was, all in all, one of the most fun things I've ever been lucky enough to do in my life. However, I'll leave you with this warning: be prepared for a culture shock when it's all over. After four nights without much sleep, and being in character for nearly all that time, Nathan, Richard and I were definitely not prepared for what happened on the way back. It seems innocuous enough, but we stopped off at a service station. Walking in, we were confronted by flashing lights on arcade machines. Jean-Michel Jarre was being piped in through unseen speakers. Bright lights and strangely coloured pre-packaged commodities were being sold in shops nearby. All three of us just stood in the doorway and looked around in amazement. It took nearly two days to come down from it all, and I understand this is quite common. But don't let that scare you off!

"It's well worth getting involved, and I can recommend it to all roleplayers as the experience of a lifetime."

So much happened over the five days I was at the event that I can't even begin to relate it all to you in such a limited space. Needless to say, though, it's well worth getting involved, and I can heartily recommend it to all roleplayers as the experience of a lifetime. I will most definitely be at The Gathering next year. Not even gales, torrential rain, fire, acts of God or unknown antagonists from rival LARP events childishly stealing the signposts could keep me away.

A veteran's viewpoint

The Gathering recently celebrated its fifth successful year, but as an event for experienced live-action roleplayers, does it have what it takes to carry on going for another five?

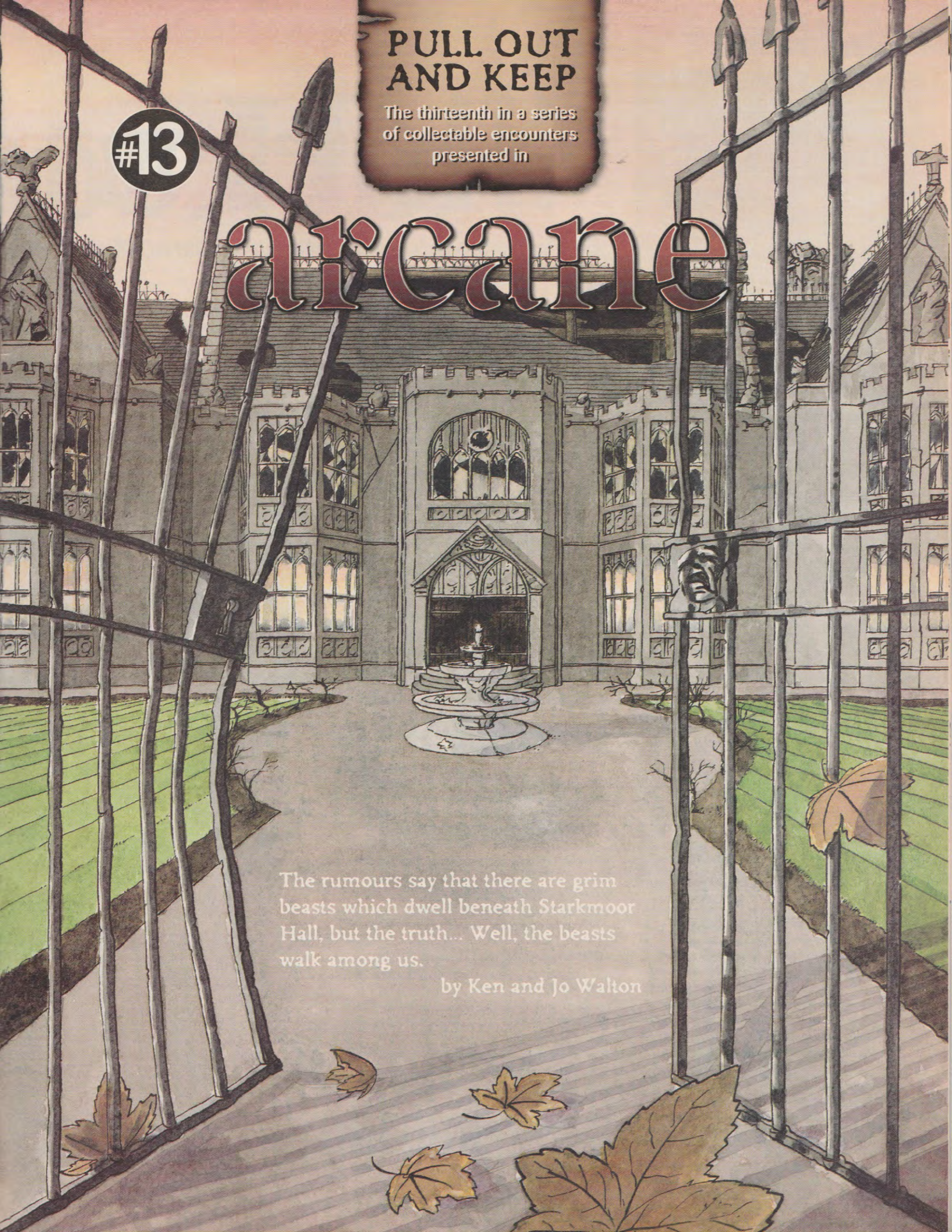
The system used by The Gathering and its smaller sister events, the Faction Moots, is easy to understand. Characters align themselves with one of the Factions and advance in Rank within them, gaining money and command. There are no character classes as such, making for flexible character generation. Fighters can have magic, Scouts can be good at healing and Mages can carry a sword and lop people off at the knees – it all depends on how many points you spend when you first create your character.

The combat system is slightly disappointing for experienced live roleplayers, because it doesn't take account of the fighting ability, strength or stamina of a particular character. In fact, in combat everyone will be dead after a few good hits, which makes having Healers mulling around essential. However, this is a system for thousands of people, all of whom must be able to readily comprehend it, create their own characters at home and perform actions without having a referee present for every fight. Another aspect to consider is the importance of good equipment. In Lorien Trust games, if there is no physical representation of an object, then there is no effect. This means that if you want to have the protection of chain-mail armour, you have to wear chain-mail armour. This can be expensive, and heavy, and can also restrict the types of characters which you can play. As for the actual gameplay, if you aren't of a high Rank, the 'official' plot will most likely pass you by completely. Unless you can worm your way into one of the guilds, you're left to go out and stir up trouble for yourself. Although this can be fun, it leaves very little scope for character development, and can make you feel as if you're merely cannon fodder for the big battle to come.

For me, the battle is one of the best parts of the whole event. Realistically there is complete confusion, bad weather and lots of waiting around until the one great push which leaves the adrenaline surging (and me lying dead in the mud). Luckily there's usually enough magic floating around to keep your character from dying. It just hurts a lot.

Is it worth it for the veteran live-action roleplayer? Well, I'll certainly be going again next year.

Tamsyn Hutchinson (aka Dralisha of the Vipers)


PULL OUT AND KEEP
The thirteenth in a series of collectable encounters presented in
#13
arcane
The rumours say that there are grim beasts which dwell beneath Starkmoor Hall, but the truth... Well, the beasts walk among us.
by Ken and Jo Walton

Starkmoor Hall

The house itself is a burnt-out shell, and part of the east wing is nothing more than a pile of rubble. Only the main hall has been renovated to its Victorian best (reproduced from old photographs). Most of the rooms are filled with broken masonry, charred beams and floorboards fallen from above, shards of glass and the like. Anything that survived the devastating fire has been ruined by another 60 years of wind and rain.

The main hall is an exception to this rule. Its walls have been repainted, its doors replaced, its marble floor polished. Two great sweeping staircases lead up to a balcony on the floor above. The balcony itself is safe, but anyone stepping off it is likely to find the floors unsafe or even nonexistent. The ceiling above the main hall has been repaired, and a reproduction of the great chandelier which used to hang there has been hung from it. At the bottom of the staircases there are statues of Greek gods, and the walls are highly decorated with fanciful bas-reliefs of ancient Greek gods and heroes. One corner of the room is an enclosed space in which coats and hats can be hung.

Long, polished oak tables are laid along the length of the back wall, under the balcony, and this is where Elanor lays out food and drink when having one of her famous wild parties. A hidden sound system can provide deafeningly loud music at the mere touch of a button, and the chandelier itself has been cunningly designed to function as a multi-coloured laser light show when required.

The Last Magicians

The Last Magicians is a Goth band which has gained a following in the local area. The group members travel round the country in a black van, emblazoned with a silver pentagram on each side. Although the band is fairly popular and the music generally well received, this is only part of the story – it is, in fact, a cover for their real job, which is the much more sinister business of vampire hunting.

Having recently heard rumours of the mysterious disappearances in the vicinity of Starkmoor Hall, The Last Magicians have come to play a gig at the King's Cruelty, hoping to investigate the Hall while they are there. The lead singer is called Mish, and he doubles up as the band's chief vampire hunter. His girlfriend, Pandora (the band's former drummer), became a vampire, and some time ago he was forced to kill her with a stake through the heart – a memory that refuses to fade for him. The band now has a drum machine called Pandora which is dedicated to her memory, and it is said among The Last Magicians' most faithful fans that when the band is playing particularly well, the drum machine is possessed by the spirit of its former drummer.

The band's van, as well as containing all their music gear, has an impressive assortment of vampire hunting equipment, including various stakes, crucifixes, garlic, bibles, bottles of holy water and swords (which are suitable for cutting vampire's heads off – Mish is an expert swordsman).

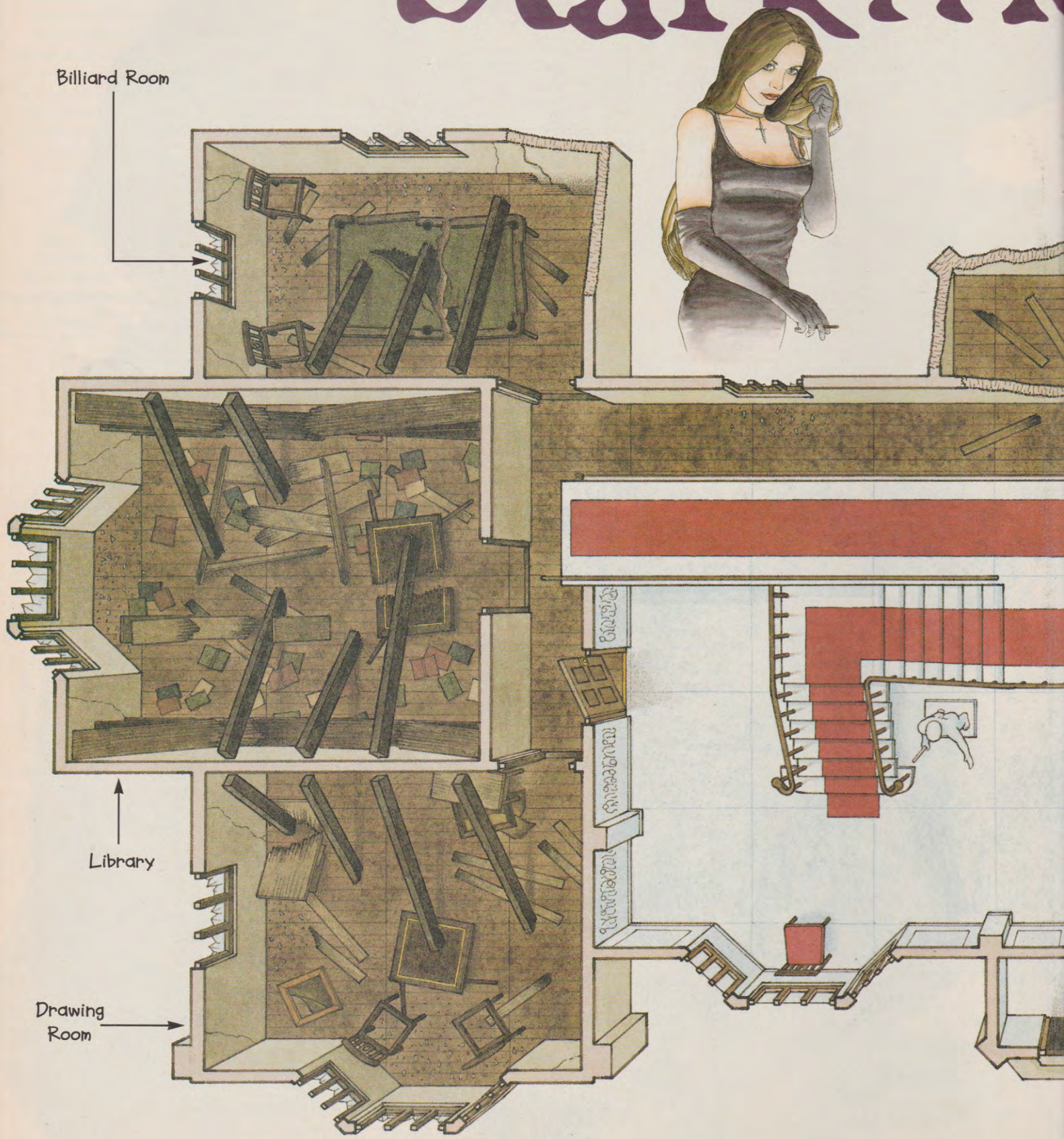
Young Bartlett

Joseph Bartlett is the son of the old family retainer who died in the fire of 1935. His family has been serving the estate for generations, and Young Bartlett, as he's known to the villagers, now works for Helen Marsden, looking after the grounds of the house. He's an old, wizened little man, with a day's grey stubble on his wrinkled chin and a virtually impenetrable local accent. He's probably mad. During the day, he can be seen in the grounds, pushing a wheelbarrow, or riding about on a motor-mower. He's always safely home before sunset. He'll cheerfully tell anyone who enquires that Miss Marsden disappeared some time ago, but as long as he keeps getting his salary, he'll keep doing the gardening. He's a good source of rumours, but anything he says should be taken with a pinch of salt, and he's not above saying what he thinks his listener wants to hear.

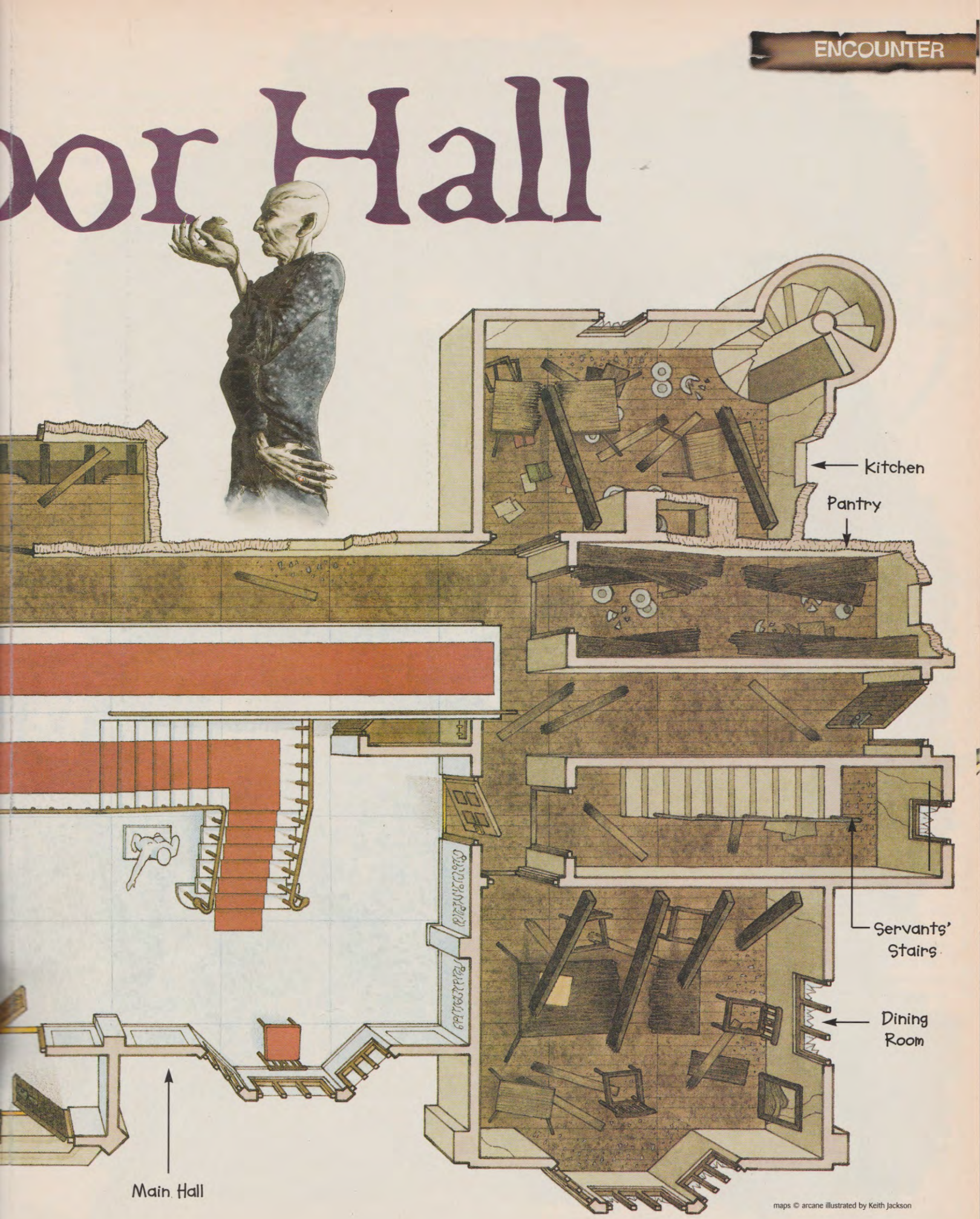
Quote:
"They do say, as 'ow there's a monster lives in them ruins. I don't rightly know if it's true, but I goes 'ome early, and I locks me doors at night."

Stairs to
mock Mausoleum
Lord Starkmoor's
Quarters
Elanor's
Quarters
Hole to
lower Cabins
Stairs to Kitchen

Starkm



oor Hall



maps © arcane illustrated by Keith Jackson

Lord Starkmoor's Quarters

Although Starkmoor is littered with rubbish, there is no wood anywhere within the confines of the hall. Everything that at first glance looks like wood is either plastic or chipboard.

The Catacombs

The catacombs were built as a folly, to resemble the underground burial chambers Starkmoor had seen on his European travels. They are partly man-made and partly natural caverns. The walls are rough-hewn, with low arched ceilings, and there are numerous ominous carvings on the walls (death heads, grim reapers and the like). Scattered about the floor are the bones of Starkmoor's many unfortunate victims, and their skulls are to be found in piles, or singly in nooks in the wall, candles perched upon them. More recent bodies are here too, and are neatly laid on slabs in various states of decomposition. The catacombs are a sinister and terrible place. There are two entrances: one, an eerie spiral staircase, leads from the old kitchen of the mansion, the other, a broad marble staircase, leads down from a mock stone mausoleum in the grounds.

Two areas of the catacombs are of special note. These are the living quarters of Elanor and Starkmoor.

Elanor's Quarters

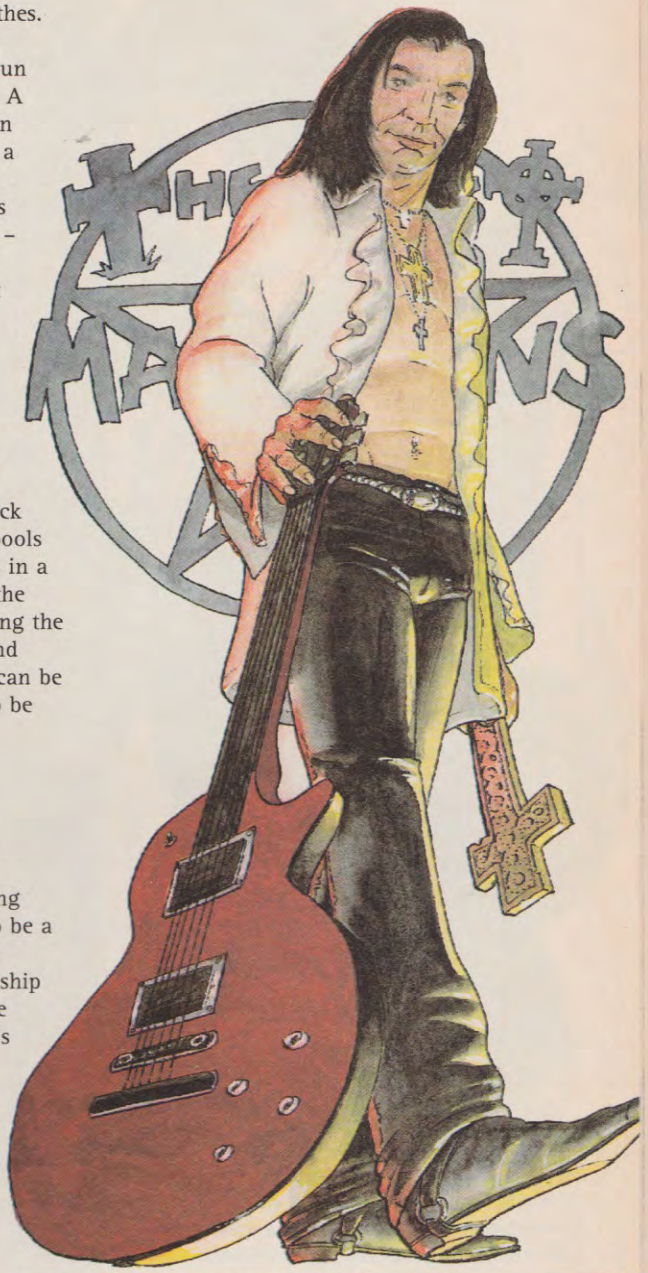
Elanor's quarters are a strange mixture of the traditional and the modern. Elanor has hung the walls with tapestries, silk scarves and Persian rugs, and the place is lit with Chinese lanterns and many black candles. Incense burns constantly, giving the cave an exotic fragrance. A large four-poster bed stands in the middle of the room, hung about with dark red curtains. A big Victorian wardrobe houses her extensive collection of clothes. At the end of the room is a huge, old leather-topped desk, and on it sits a Sun Workstation, with full Internet access. A top-of-the-range hi-fi system is hidden behind one of the wall hangings, and a wide-screen television can be found behind another. Everything in Elanor's quarters is in a kind of ordered chaos – there are lots of books, clothes, CDs and disks in piles about the place, but everything is very clean.

Starkmoor's Quarters

The Lord's quarters is a charnel-house. A row of slabs has bodies laid out on them, piles of bones lie in the corners, and a pyramid of skulls forms a stand for a group of huge black candles, whose wax drips down and pools on the floor. Starkmoor himself sleeps in a marble sarcophagus in the middle of the mess. Rats scurry about and root among the bones, and the room reeks of death and decay. Manacles attached to the wall can be used for chaining up live prisoners, to be feasted on later.

Next month

In the next issue of **arcane** we're taking you off to investigate what appears to be a strange body of gass floating in outer space. Already there have been space ship disappearences in the area, and you've been commissioned to work out what's going on. The truth, when it comes, will shock you to the core. Get the next month's Encounter in **arcane** 14, on sale Friday 29th November.



Mish

Mish, The Last Magicians' lead singer, is a handsome man in his mid-20s, with a mischievous grin and a fanatical hatred of vampires. His hair is long and slightly unkept, and he usually wears jeans and an open shirt, because he thinks that's what rock 'n' roll stars do. He has big plans for The Last Magicians, but these are usually scuppered by his obsession with tracking down vampires. After the death of his former girlfriend, Pandora, Mish has become much more serious in his outlook on life, but the band's many fans just put this down to musical maturity. It's true that Mish doesn't want The Last Magicians to be typecast as just another struggling band, playing at various pubs up and down the country because nowhere bigger will take them, but it has to be said that the group members haven't exactly hit the big time. Mish has more musical talent than the others, and there are rumours among the fans that he might strike out on his own and start a solo career.

Quote: (from one of The Last Magicians' more popular songs) "Don't be afraid... to die in my embrace... There's no need to be scared."

Lilith Elanor

Elanor (as she is known to her friends) is also a vampire. Stunningly attractive, she charms all who meet her with her sweet smile and enthusiastic personality. She has long, dark brown hair and a pale face. Her eyes are usually hidden behind small, round, dark glasses. She is always impeccably dressed, often in a black flowing dress and a blue-grey airforce officer's jacket. She wears a pendant around her neck in the form of a silver sword, about two inches long. When met in the King's Cruelty, she is usually found with a pint of cider in one hand and a cigar in the other. The local youths think she is incredibly cool – all the girls try to emulate her dress sense and the boys are all madly in love with her. Many of these youths know that she is a vampire – such is her charm that they tell no-one, and indeed consider it a great thrill to be chosen to have some of their blood drunk by her. She never drains enough to cause lasting harm to her followers, and her parties at Starkmoor Hall are considered *the* place to be. Her great secret is the sword pendant around her neck. If seriously threatened, she can transform this into a four foot-long broad-sword, which she wields with devastating skill. Vampire hunters, beware!

Quote: "Just time for another drink..."

Scenario Seeds

Before the Fire

A historical game set in Starkmoor Hall when Lord Starkmoor is still actively preying on his staff. This could include PCs as visitors to the Hall, or as servants, and would involve slowly discovering the Lord's horrific secret and confronting him, possibly climaxing with the burning down of the Hall.

Dungeons

In a fantasy game, the catacombs could be used as a dungeon, and there would probably be a real cave system somewhere in the mountains. They would be inhabited by many vampire minions, hell-hounds, bats and so on, and Lord Starkmoor would be a vampire lord of extremely evil repute, whom the characters must endeavour to dispose of. Alternatively, the PCs could come out of a deep dungeon into the catacombs under the house as a way of moving, without the transition from a fantasy world into the real world being too fast.

Medieval Vampires

In a historical game, the house could be replaced by a castle (maybe The Keep from **arcane** 6 – turn to page 53 if you missed it). Lord Starkmoor would be able to behave much more openly, in the manner of Dracula, perhaps. Elanor would be a more sinister figure, doing her Lord's work willingly and without questioning his authority, and the locals could be terrified and superstitious peasants.

Obsession

Lilith Elanor has been a vampire for a long time, and the reason she hates Lord Starkmoor is because he killed her lover in a vicious attack. From time to time she finds someone who vaguely resembles him, and becomes completely obsessed with him. This person could be a PC, who may be flattered to receive the attention of this beautiful woman. Alternatively, it could be an important NPC. Although she is a vampire she will neither harm her lover nor turn him into a vampire. The same is not true of any friends of his who try to separate them. Her desire is to re-enact what happened with her original lover, but this time with Lord Starkmoor being the one who ends up dead. This sort of plot is probably best begun slowly in the midst of a lot of other events, with rumours of disappearances and so on slowly increasing the level of suspense.

The Adventure

A complex situation is developing around Starkmoor Hall. A group of disparate characters are manoeuvring for power.

Elanor has recently been getting sick of the ruthless bloodthirst of Lord Starkmoor. She would rather be rid of him, but lacks the power to kill him on her own. She intends to lure someone more capable to the Hall in the hope that this person can kill him instead. She has planned one of her parties for tonight, and is hoping that someone there can help her defeat the nosferatu.

Lord Starkmoor, for his part, is equally sick of Elanor. In his long torpor, he has lost what little humanity he may once have had, and wishes only to go on a killing spree. Elanor tells him that in the modern age he will be tracked down easily, and he must be more subtle. He has decided to reveal himself at the party tonight and turn as many victims as possible into vampires, in the hope that they will be his willing servants. As his bloodlust rises in anticipation of this feast, his last shreds of humanity vanish, and he becomes a bestial killing machine.

Mish and The Last Magicians have a shrewd idea that there is a vampire or vampires at the Hall, and intend to investigate and kill any they find.

The PCs

The players could be allied to any of the factions. They could be:

– vampires who are loyal to Lord Starkmoor. If this is the case, they could be quite old and powerful vampires. They may wish to join Starkmoor in his feast, or they may wish to stop him in order to preserve their own anonymity.

– younger vampires, allied to Lilith Elanor. In this case, they will almost certainly be on her side in the coming conflict. They will probably have become aware of their true nature relatively recently, and may still be learning the extent of their powers and abilities.

– members of The Last Magicians, seeking to infiltrate the vampires' lair and hunt down the evil bloodsuckers.

– local youngsters, looking for a good time at their beloved Elanor's party, little expecting the horror in which they are to be thrown.

– innocent visitors (tourists perhaps?) who happen to be in the pub and get invited to the party at Starkmoor Hall, having not the slightest idea that there are vampires about.

– friends of Helen Marsden from before she became a vampire, either just passing through and going to visit, or trying to find out what has happened to her.

The King's Cruelty

The adventure starts in the King's Cruelty, where Elanor is holding court with her young admirers. She buys drinks for all and sundry, and moves constantly among the crowd, bestowing a smile here, a hug there, and a word of sympathy to the maudlin drunk in the corner. She's obviously the life and soul of the party. When The Last Magicians start to play, she immediately begins to dance, encouraging others to do so. It soon becomes obvious to anyone with any empathy that Elanor and Mish are attracted to each other, and their eyes meet again and again as the evening wears on. At this point, Mish has no idea that she is a vampire, and she has no idea that he is a vampire hunter. When the band finishes playing and last orders are called, Elanor immediately rushes up to congratulate the band, hugging them all and inviting them to her party. She invites everyone in the pub to come along, and a trail of happy, drunken and unsuspecting people meander out of the pub and up the country lane towards the fateful mansion house.

If the PCs know nothing of what's going on, they should hear dark hints from the locals while in the pub. The older people in the pub will frown at Elanor and call her a bad influence, and mutter darkly about bad blood in the family and, "look what happened to the old Lord." This is the time to tell the chilling tale of Starkmoor Hall. The youngsters, on the other hand, will have nothing but praise for Elanor and her "really cool" mansion.

The Party

The party has already been prepared by Elanor. Food and drink is laid on in the renovated entrance to the mansion. If the PCs are seeing the Hall for the first time at night, they will probably not realise that it is ruined, though the lack of lights may be a tad disconcerting. The wide curving staircases lead to the upper floor, which has large holes in it. Anyone creeping up in the dark (perhaps looking for the bathroom, or vampire hunting) stands a chance of a nasty accident, or at least a fright.

At some point early on in the party, Elanor will take someone through the rear doors of the room, to drain a little blood. This could be one of the youngsters, or maybe one of the PCs. It will look like a little flirtation to anyone else – some hugging, some giggling, and slipping out the back to be on their own for a while. Mish is watching Elanor carefully – he's starting to get suspicious. He'll also be watching any other (PC) vampires present.

If any of the PCs go looking for Lord Starkmoor, they'll find him in the catacombs. It's very dark down there, and Starkmoor knows his way around better than anyone else. A game of cat-and-mouse will ensue, with Starkmoor doubling back down passages and picking off stragglers in the PC group. If the PCs call for help, or you think they need it, Elanor will turn up and help them fight Starkmoor. In doing so, she will reveal her vampiric powers, and it will be up to the PCs to decide how to treat her.

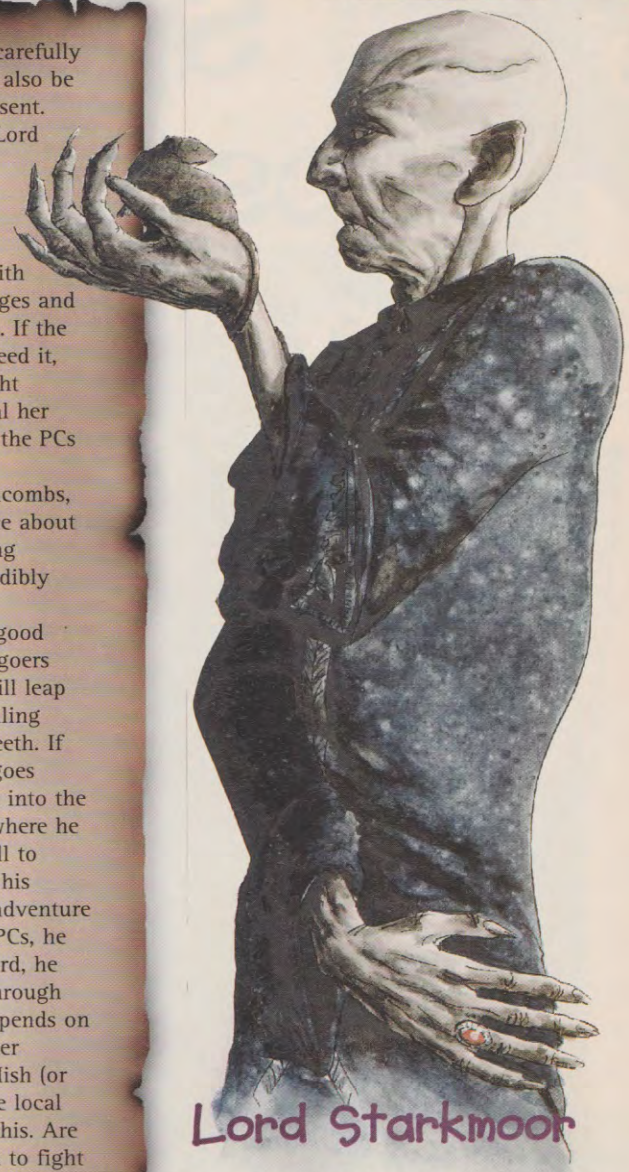
If no-one goes searching the catacombs, Lord Starkmoor will make his entrance about an hour after the party begins, walking silently down the staircase. He's incredibly ugly, and his eyes burn with a red malevolence. This is obviously not a good guy, whichever side you're on. Party-goers will begin to panic, and Starkmoor will leap from the staircase into their midst, killing indiscriminately with his claws and teeth. If the fight with whoever opposes him goes badly, he will turn into a bat and flee into the catacombs, making for his quarters, where he keeps a live victim chained to the wall to provide him with fresh blood. It is in his quarters that the grand finale of the adventure takes place. He may be killed by the PCs, he may be killed by Elanor with her sword, he may be killed by Mish with a stake through the heart. What happens after that depends on the party. Elanor will have revealed her vampirism during the evening, and Mish (or the PCs) may want to kill her too. The local youngsters will do their best to stop this. Are vampire-hunting PCs ruthless enough to fight through the teenagers to kill their prey?

Inspiration

The classic vampire novel is, of course, Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* Another classic is Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (handily collected in the excellent *Penguin Book of Vampires* edited by Alan Ryan). More recent vampire inspiration includes Steven Brust's *Agyar,* Barbara Hambly's *Some of Your Blood,* Stephen King's *Salem's Lot,* Tanith Lee's *Blood of Roses,* Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* and Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire* and sequels.

Films worth seeing include Bram Stoker's *Dracula, Interview with a Vampire, Nosferatu* and *The Lost Boys.*

Suitable sources of vampiric roleplaying include, *Chill* (Mayfair Games), *GURPS Blood Types, GURPS Horror* and *GURPS Vampire: The Masquerade* (Steve Jackson Games); *AD&D Ravenloft* (TSR) and *Vampire: The Masquerade* and *Vampire: The Dark Ages* (White Wolf).



Lord Starkmoor

When the local villagers burned down Starkmoor Hall, Lord Starkmoor, a type of vampire known to some as Nosferatu, hid in the catacombs beneath the house. The collapse of part of the mansion trapped him inside. Without his supply of blood, he fell into a torpor, until found again by Helen Marsden when the house was being renovated. He drained the unsuspecting young woman of blood, and turned her into a vampire like himself. Starkmoor is an old and evil vampire, lacking in any sense of morals, who sees his victims as nothing more than food. Immensely ugly and strong, he has the ability to turn himself into a bat, and can also command small animals such as rats and ravens to spy for him and attack unwanted visitors in swarms. When Elanor holds her parties, he often watches through the eyes of one of these creatures for a likely source of blood. When one takes his fancy, he will follow the unfortunate victim, wait until he or she is alone, then suck its blood until it is dead. He puts the body in his catacombs, together with the victims of his previous feedings – a grisly reminder to himself of his ungodly powers.

Quote: "Such perfect skin. It seems a pity to break it."

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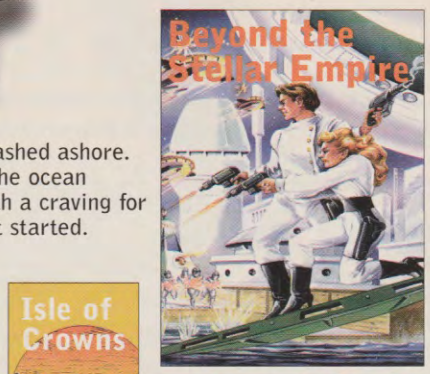

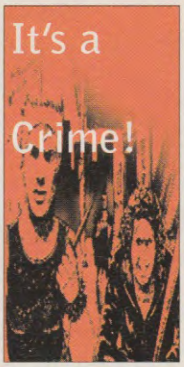

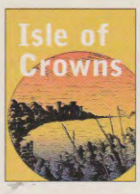

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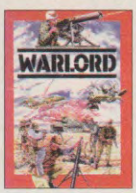

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New Fantasy Settings Part 4: To Modernity and Beyond

Phil Masters gets bang up to date with campaigns set in World War I, the pulp era, the modern day and space opera science fiction.

In modern-style games, you have to consider how much high technology should dominate plots. Cars and even guns are essentially 'furniture' – players see what they are and then ignore them. On the other hand, scenarios that take place in space, or battles with AI computers possessed by evil spirits, bring technology into the foreground – PC technical skills (and specialised player knowledge) can then become very important.

In this, the last part of the series, the history that we are considering as a basis for fantasy game settings is either very recent, or it hasn't happened yet. In fact, why should a fantasy world look historical at all? If magic is the crucial component of fantasy, then fantasy worlds should logically be very different from anything historical. On the other hand, they might be quite similar to the modern world – with fast, long-distance transport, weapons that can devastate whole cities, treatments for most diseases and substantial social mobility. (Or, to put it another way, most fantasy worlds look like the present.) So, let's consider our century.

In The Trenches

Some people like their fantasy dark and gritty, with magic used for death and destruction. This could get messy, and the archetypal messy conflict of our age was the 1914-18 war.

Look at the sorts of situations that some game magic makes feasible – poisonous vapours, zombie soldiers, and just enough healing that troops could be sent back to face repeated maimings. Now throw in arrogant aristocratic leaders, or priestly rulers who know that their gods are real. A war-based campaign could soon get bogged down in the trenches.

This may sound like a very modern, cynical view of fantasy, but even in *The Lord of the Rings,* Mordor seems to have been filled with smoke and the paraphernalia of total war; orcs would surely be good at digging trenches. Such a setting could even have more chivalrous elements – overhead, instead of Biggles, you get heroes on flying carpets duelling screaming wraiths.

That leaves the question of why anyone would want to play in such a game – after all, it's not only depressing and dark, but it's defined by the military aspect, and players generally hate having to take orders. Perhaps the best approach is to permit the PCs to make a difference by, for example, sending them on a mission to bring down the Dark Lord whose zombie hordes are transforming a fantasy world into a giant war zone.

TECHNOLOGY:

The technology in WWI-style campaigns need not be overly advanced – dark magics could be quite enough to generate the tone. On the other hand, a bit of early 20th century hardware might help fill a few gaps, without every soldier being a spell-caster.

This means reasonably advanced machinery, but it's still rather crude and cumbersome to modern eyes. It includes big, lumbering, steam or petrol-powered vehicles, bolt-action rifles, perhaps some radio but nothing portable, ironclads at sea and 'sticks-and-string' aircraft.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION:

The society in this sort of campaign should be modern enough that the soldiers in the trenches ought to be seen as human beings with rights, but old-fashioned and deferential enough that the arrogant commanders who send millions to their deaths don't see anything immoral in their position. In addition, there should be a sense of innocence and beauty recently lost.

The warring nations could be autocratic monarchies, imperfect democracies, or even newly emerged from popular revolutions. If they have mass communications, even the most democratic populations can be whipped into war fever by jingoistic newspapers.

Plotting Your Campaign

One consideration when planning a modern-style fantasy campaign is the question of plots. Fantasy campaigns traditionally use a number of classic elements: the cross-country quest, court intrigue, the hero from a remote village and so on. However, fast and efficient communications and democratic or bureaucratic governments reduce the plausibility of many of these. It's not impossible to create interesting plots – there are plenty of good modern day games around – but those that are possible may look too modern, losing much of the point of fantasy. (Although if your players are sick of having their characters trudging through the mud all the time, this 'problem' may actually make a pleasant change for them.)

The best solution is probably to emphasise the fantastic – not to weigh PCs down with magical equipment, but to make them see the gameworld as a magical place. Encounters with supernatural beings (not just humans with short legs or pointy ears, but spirits and powers), complex magical effects and dangers that require knowledge of the supernatural to defeat, should be reasonably commonplace. Dedicated refs can make up entire magical cosmologies, with planets moving on crystal spheres rather than obeying Newtonian dynamics, and chemistry based on the alchemical elements of fire, water, earth and air.

But in the end, it's down to what you and your players want. Are you after strange fantasy, or do you just want clichés and the familiar?

THE SUPERNATURAL:

Magic in this setting should mostly be dark and twisted, and probably quite powerful. However, there can be a Shire/Elfland area on the side of good, giving the heroes something special to defend, and this implies a certain type of non-human. On the other hand, traditional machine-crazed fantasy dwarves can provide some of the killing-machine technology.

If ghosts and other free-willed undead exist, things can get even more tortuous. In the real world, some people who lost loved ones in WWI became obsessed with spiritualism and attempts to contact the departed. If this were possible, a lot of game plots could emerge, from attempts to complete unfinished missions to quests for revenge on commanders.

Two-Fisted Tales

For those who prefer their fantasy to be swashbuckling and melodramatic, why not look at the archetypal high adventure fiction?

Welcome to fantasy in the style of the pulp era! Mix two-fisted heroes with magic, fly around on biplanes and broomsticks… Or combine detectives in trenchcoats with vampires and evil priests. A lot of spectacular fun, if players are prepared to enter into the spirit of the thing.

Actually, the pulp era and pulp style fit the conventions of fantasy gameworlds in several ways. For example, the whole planet has been mapped, more or less, but there are still unexplored and mysterious areas. There is also a multitude of cults, the looming threat of war against a powerful evil, and mighty empires in their dotage. It is up to the world designer whether to make this environment wildly melodramatic or more realistic – either could be made to work.

TECHNOLOGY:

Part of the pulp image involves fast, stylish, but imperfect transportation, along with powerful, reliable weapons – the detective's pistol, the big game hunter's elephant gun, the Tommy-gun proving useless against the Elder God – and some long-distance communications, so unless you want to make magic widely available, you will probably have to place the same level of technology in the gameworld. This is more modernist than steampunk, but still a little cumbersome and unreliable – Tommy-guns and vintage Bentleys rather than Uzis and Ferraris.

Of course, you can always add your own fantastical touches to the '30s tech, either as stylistic additions (for example, guns loaded with silver bullets) or actually built in (perhaps using vehicles powered by elemental engines). But the latter case especially may demand a little care and attention – if a magician is required to build a machine and bind its empowering spirits, how many magicians are there working in factories?

SOCIAL ORGANISATION:

A world as close to the present as this really needs a modern sort of social system. That's not to say you can't have a few kings and princes scattered around, but they should look a little anachronistic, and probably spend a fair amount of time worrying about keeping the consent of their people, in a way that would look feeble to a medieval overlord. The world-threatening figures should be dictators who have risen to power using rhetoric and extreme ideologies, or (more pulpishly) secret masterminds – wizards, mad scientists and charismatic cult leaders, threatening the world from their hidden lairs.

Social mobility should be fairly commonplace and characters who acquire wealth (and a little respectability) should be able to mingle in the highest circles. However, this doesn't mean that everything should be wonderful for everyone – during the Depression, for example, millions found themselves out of work without even the most basic forms of financial relief. Beggars and the poor can certainly appear.

THE SUPERNATURAL:

Classic pulp fiction tends to feature the supernatural as a mystery or threat. Fantasy games can emulate this, or integrate magical elements into the setting as more natural features. For example, non-human races could all be sinister and hostile, or they could be mysterious occupants of remote lost worlds and hidden valleys, or perhaps they could be seen wandering down the street every day, providing just a hint of the exotic. Similarly, magicians could all be scheming, evil cultists – enigmatic allies at best – or magic could be used routinely for transport and combat, with mage detectives in trenchcoats.

Given the can-do enthusiasm and cut-price modernity of the pulps, it is probably best to treat magic as generally comprehensible and susceptible to scholarly analysis. However, it can still retain an edge of sinister irrationality – remember, HP Lovecraft was a pulp writer…

A Familiar Setting

Perhaps the easiest world of all to draw on for ideas is the modern day; after all, this requires no special knowledge of history. On the other hand, the complexity of combining the fantastic with something so well known can be a major problem in itself.

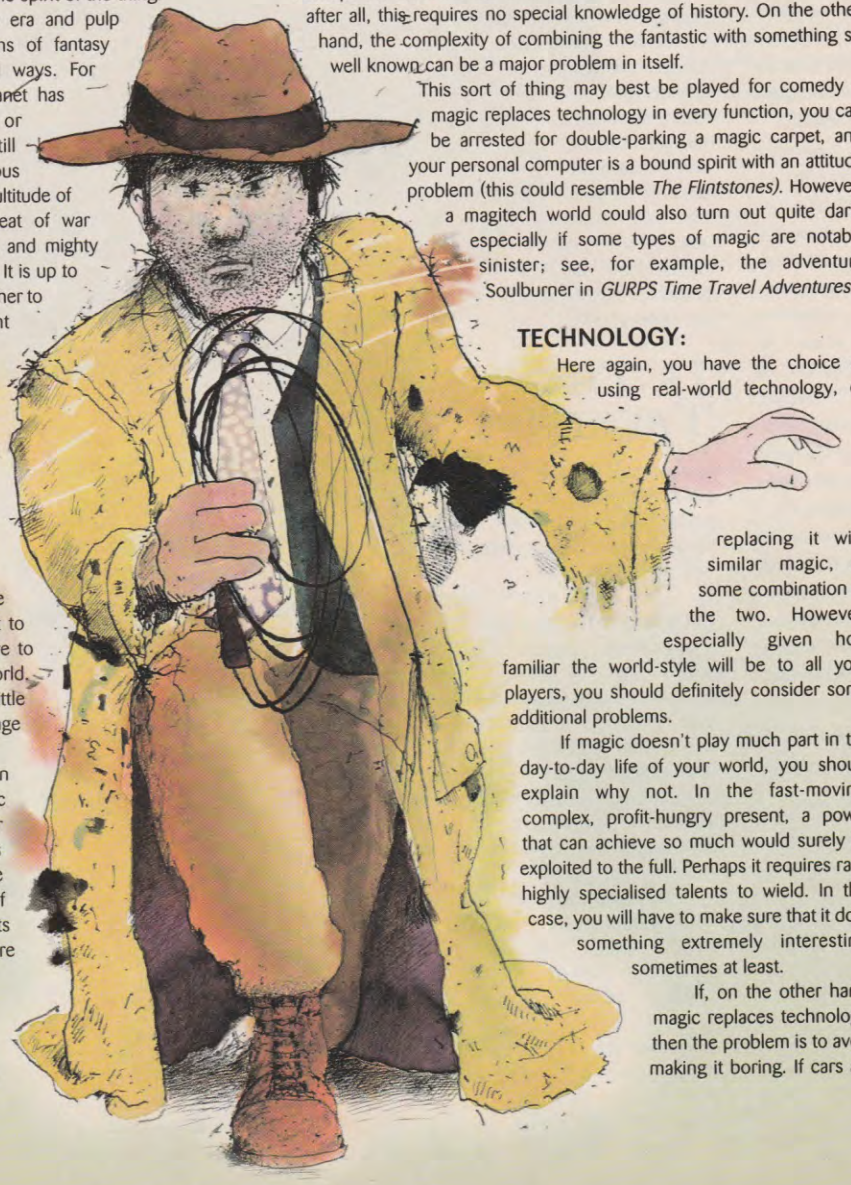
This sort of thing may best be played for comedy – magic replaces technology in every function, you can be arrested for double-parking a magic carpet, and your personal computer is a bound spirit with an attitude problem (this could resemble *The Flintstones*). However, a magitech world could also turn out quite dark, especially if some types of magic are notably sinister; see, for example, the adventure Soulburner in *GURPS Time Travel Adventures*.

TECHNOLOGY:

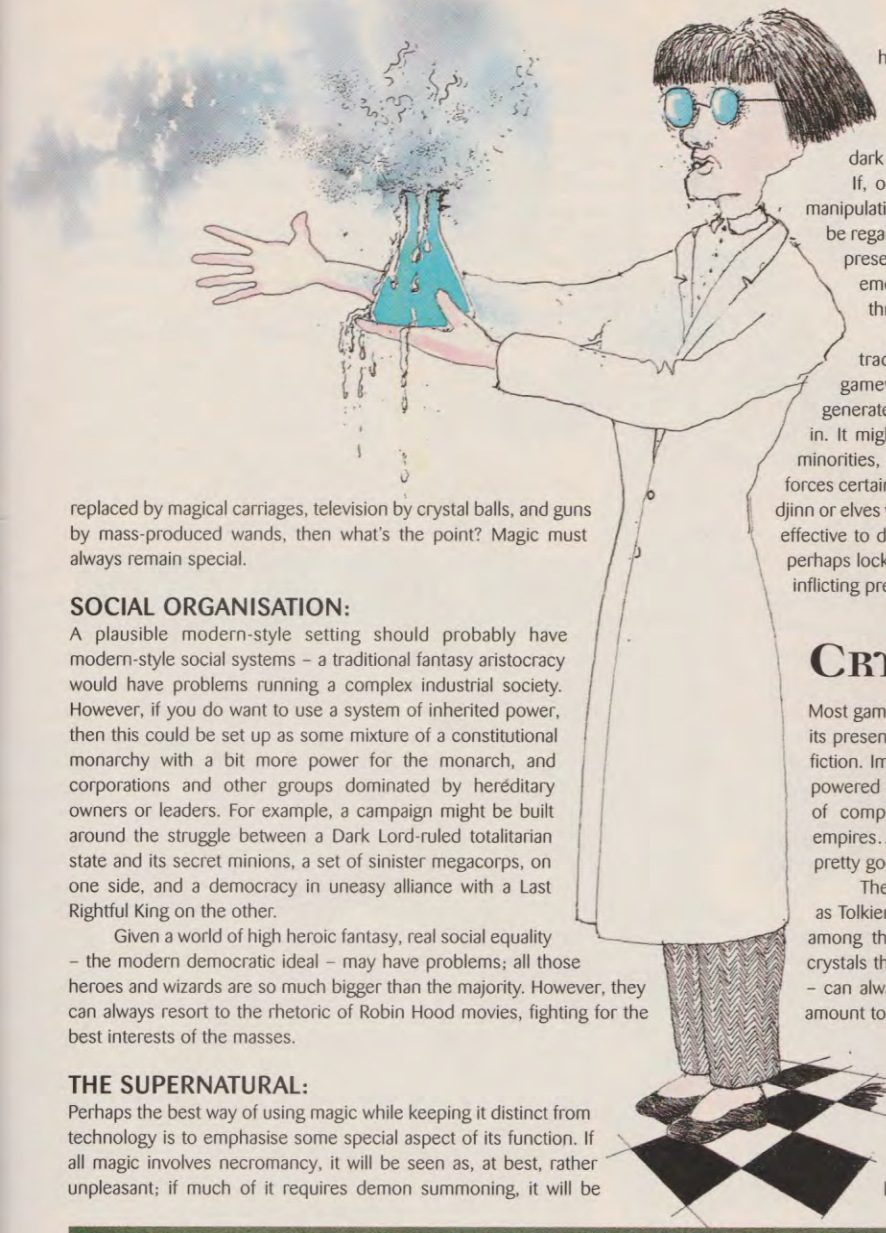
Here again, you have the choice of using real-world technology, or replacing it with similar magic, or some combination of the two. However, especially given how familiar the world-style will be to all your players, you should definitely consider some additional problems.

If magic doesn't play much part in the day-to-day life of your world, you should explain why not. In the fast-moving, complex, profit-hungry present, a power that can achieve so much would surely be exploited to the full. Perhaps it requires rare, highly specialised talents to wield. In that case, you will have to make sure that it does something extremely interesting, sometimes at least.

If, on the other hand, magic replaces technology, then the problem is to avoid making it boring. If cars are



By focusing on dark fantasy and film noir pulp, *Bloodshadows* makes magic both commonplace and sinister.



replaced by magical carriages, television by crystal balls, and guns by mass-produced wands, then what's the point? Magic must always remain special.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION:

A plausible modern-style setting should probably have modern-style social systems – a traditional fantasy aristocracy would have problems running a complex industrial society. However, if you do want to use a system of inherited power, then this could be set up as some mixture of a constitutional monarchy with a bit more power for the monarch, and corporations and other groups dominated by hereditary owners or leaders. For example, a campaign might be built around the struggle between a Dark Lord-ruled totalitarian state and its secret minions, a set of sinister megacorps, on one side, and a democracy in uneasy alliance with a Last Rightful King on the other.

Given a world of high heroic fantasy, real social equality – the modern democratic ideal – may have problems; all those heroes and wizards are so much bigger than the majority. However, they can always resort to the rhetoric of Robin Hood movies, fighting for the best interests of the masses.

THE SUPERNATURAL:

Perhaps the best way of using magic while keeping it distinct from technology is to emphasise some special aspect of its function. If all magic involves necromancy, it will be seen as, at best, rather unpleasant; if much of it requires demon summoning, it will be hated and feared. However, in neither case would it necessarily be suppressed because too many people and organisations like to exploit sources of power for their own gains. Secret necromantic research labs could be a dark corporate or government secret.

If, on the other hand, magic is all about warping reality and manipulating ideas (as in White Wolf's *Mage),* then it would probably be regarded with a mixture of awe and fear. Magic that requires the presence of a uniquely talented individual could lead to the emergence of a new kind of aristocracy, or at the very least the threat of one developing.

As for non-human races, this may be the hardest traditional fantasy section to fit into a modern-style gameworld. Genuinely different non-humans would surely generate differences in the kind of society the players are involved in. It might be possible to fit them in as more or less oppressed minorities, struggling relentlessly to get out of the ghetto, but this forces certain stereotypes on them, and anything as powerful as fantasy djinn or elves would surely be able to fight back too well. It might be most effective to depict them as controlling foreign countries or continents, perhaps locked in edgy confrontation with humans, both suffering and inflicting prejudice.

Crystal Cities

Most games make magic extremely powerful and useful, so perhaps its presence would lead to a setting much like space opera science fiction. Imagine mile-high towers of shimmering crystal, elemental-powered ships probing the heavenly spheres, bound spirits instead of computers, demons scheming to bring down the ageless empires… Think of *Star Wars* with the brakes off and you'll have a pretty good idea of the setting.

The inspiration for such a game should be as much Doc Smith as Tolkien – treks across rural landscapes are definitely out, battles among the stars are most certainly in. Such fantastic powers – crystals that grant psychic ability, limitless energy from the cosmos – can always be rationalised as science or magic, but mostly they amount to wish fulfilment.

TECHNOLOGY:

Quite where to draw the distinction between super-technology and the supernatural may be hard to decide, but may not, in fact, be overly important in the long-run. If it flies who cares about the label on the power source? However, it may be easiest

For a brilliant combination of 1930s style and a melodramatic plot of courtly intrigue that would fit into many conventional fantasy campaigns, see the recent film of Shakespeare's *Richard III,* starring Sir Ian McKellen.

Magic vs Technology

If, in many gameworlds, magic plays the part taken by technology in our own, being used for healing, combat and communication, what part does it play in a world where technology also exists?

It could just be squeezed out. Quite likely, it's unreliable, tricksy, possibly blasphemous and requires the assistance of cranky old loonies with pointy hats. On the other hand, it might win – it seems to suffer fewer limitations, with none of that conservation of energy nonsense, and often works by doing what you ask it to do, rather than insisting on following logic. However, neither answer is really satisfactory. Try one of the following options instead:

Horses for courses: Magic and technology each end up being used for what they do best. For example, a wizard might assist in bringing down an enemy fortress by throwing lightning bolts at the walls, but why should he risk his neck when a cannon can do the job better? So he retires to a safe distance, and uses his crystal ball to spy out the defenders' plans instead – it's hard to do anything similar with any technology prior to our own era. As firearms develop, wizards happily give up their function of dishing out damage because it's tiring and dangerous. Their ability to manipulate information, and large-scale but subtle effects such as weather spells, leave them with plenty to do. Most modern wizards would probably tote pistols in hostile territory and Magic Missile spells would be forgotten as futile curiosities.

Magitech: If magic is reliable and repeatable, it could well be incorporated into growing technologies, enabling them to progress by leaps and bounds (as in *Tales of Gargentihr).* This could even culminate in production-line enchantment. The problem with this is that the combination could evolve into something so weird and potent that it's impossible to imagine what it would look like. However, campaigns set in the early days of the development of magitech could involve a lot of dramatic incidents and social change.

Rivalry: If magic and technology can't easily be combined, they may both be used, with specialists in each forming more or less friendly rivalries. Combat mages could sneer at the riflemen who need equipment to do their jobs, while the gun users dismiss the mages as fragile, over-educated and unreliable; doctors and witches might argue over best treatments even as their patients expire on them; telekinetics could go on strike over the introduction of fork-lift trucks, and so on. This is probably the hardest option to handle in game terms, particularly if you want PC groups to reflect the rivalry. The two types of character – the magic-wielder and the techie – must be made different enough in style for players to remember that there is a difference, but similar enough in power to make the rivalry serious. Frankly, in the long-run, most of these worlds will probably evolve into a 'horses for courses' situation, with different specialists finding different niches, however, a little bit of dispute could make for drama in play.

here to call the game's everyday equipment technology, and class its more exotic and bizarre elements as magic.

As for the appearance of the technology, referees might look at various styles of science fiction. Big, cigar-shaped spacecraft (covered in rivets) and cumbersome finned flying cars, as seen in old magazine illustrations, may feel suitably stylish, while elegant glowing crystalline devices with no moving parts could seem truly magical. A cyberpunk approach, with grubby, battered hardware and machinery plugged directly into human bodies, would go best with a 'dark fantasy' view; you could always replace cyberspace with the astral plane, and have all the devious corporations riddled throughout with dark and sinister demons and eerie black magicians...

The setting for *Warhammer 40,000* is nominally SF, but includes a lot of blatantly fantastic elements. Something to do with the history of the game...

SOCIAL ORGANISATION:

Although it's possible to set this sort of thing up with a contemporary-style society, it may be more interesting to revert to something rather more feudal. This fits in with a lot of science fiction, including both the Galactic Empires of *Dune* and *Star Wars*, as well as the technological feudalism of cyberpunk scenarios.

If you need logical reasons for this, you can argue that a complex, advanced society makes life difficult and uncertain for many people, while unfettered capitalism can centralise wealth. Thus, many folk might choose to grant personal allegiance to a powerful employer who offers them job security and protection. On an interstellar scale, the problem is one of communications delay – central governments can't easily control what happens a month's travel away, if there is no instant message-carrying system. And so they create a hierarchy of allegiances, with planetary governors having the power of feudal aristocrats. (Note, however, that the latter implies a campaign area much larger than available technology or magic can easily span.)

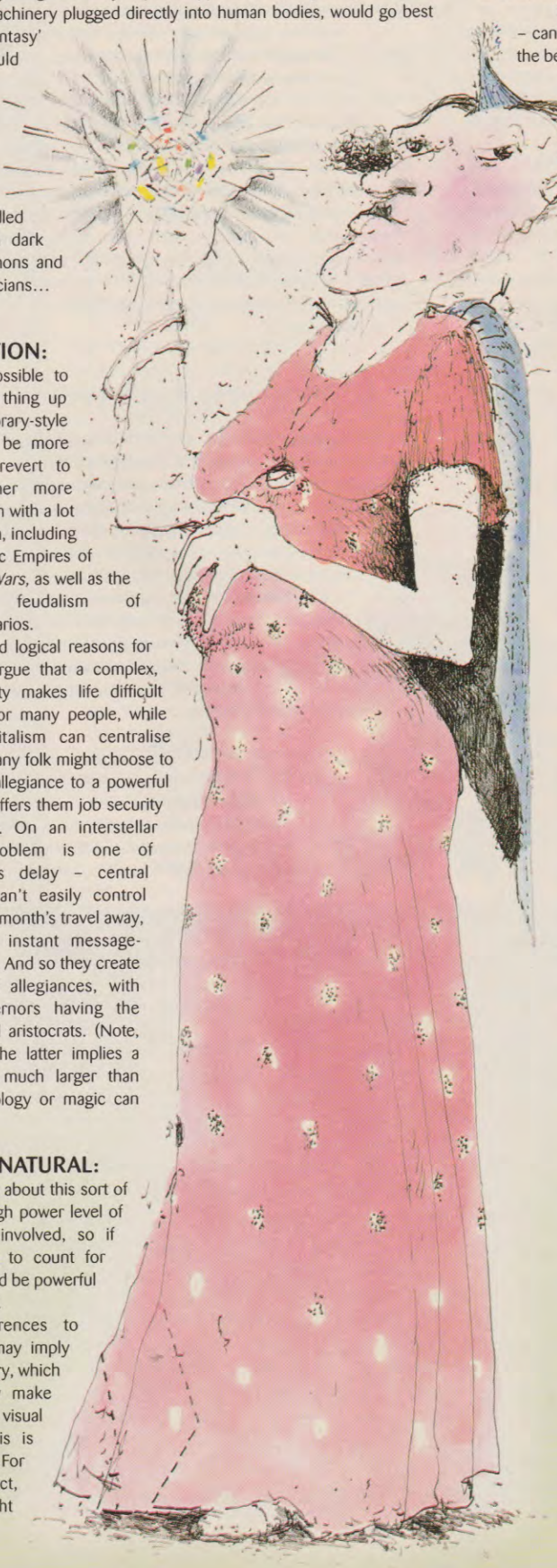
For a game which combines pulp-level melodrama with modern, futuristic and fantastical settings, see *Feng Shui*.

THE SUPERNATURAL:

The whole point about this sort of setting is the high power level of the 'furniture' involved, so if magic is going to count for enough, it should be powerful and widespread.

The references to crystal above may imply New Age imagery, which could certainly make for impressive visual effects, but this is just one option. For a darker effect, referees might take a look at HR Giger's art – not just his work on the popular *Alien* movies, but his general techno-organic approach. Necromantic and flesh-manipulating magic, or severely twisted genetic engineering, could produce results so hideous that they could only be used by villains. Alternatively, a hermetic, ritualistic magic might generate a completely different set of visuals – lots of glowing symbols, smoke and brassware, and robed magicians directing starships with their staves.

Non-humans – either spirits or races more on a par with humanity – can certainly be interesting in such a setting, because they can evoke the best science fiction depictions of alien races. However, it may be best to make sure they retain some supernatural features – the Arabian djinn, creatures of smokeless fire, could be played as science fiction 'energy beings', but their habit of granting wishes is very magical, while Gremlins could be goblin-like beings with the magical ability to make systems go wrong. Alternatively, you could just play elves as Vulcans, and centaurs as Traveller K'kree – ruthless, group-oriented vegetarians. The possibilities are manifold.



Rules to Use

There are plenty of rules systems for modern-day or SF gaming on the market, and some of them have rules for magic (or high-powered psionics) as well. That said, many of these magic systems are designed to fit specific campaign worlds, but these may still suit your requirements, or be adaptable enough.

If you are looking for flexibility, the usual generic systems are available. The *Hero* system, which was designed originally for a superhero game, can handle almost anything with a little work, while *GURPS* has two excellent supplements covering interesting magic in the modern world – *GURPS Mage* and *GURPS Voodoo* – along with its standard magic system and lots of other useful supplements.

West End Games' *Masterbook* system is also designed to be generic, but has fewer supplements as yet. On the other hand, several of them are relevant here. Those for *Indiana Jones* cover the pulp 1930s, while *Bloodshadows* demonstrates how to incorporate fragments of a particular style (1930-50s film noir) into a (dark) fantasy world, and *Necroscope* is a modern supernatural horror setting.

Talking of horror, there are plenty of these games available, covering both modern technology and supernatural powers. *Call of Cthulhu* is probably the best known (White Wolf products aside), and could easily be combined with fantasy material from *RuneQuest*. Similarly, Palladium's *Nightbane* (originally *Nightspawn*) is broadly compatible with the company's assorted fantasy, science fiction and dimension-hopping games.

White Wolf's *World of Darkness* setting is supposed to be a dark, twisted version of our own reality, but it is sometimes difficult to find any visible differences, as opposed to the secret existence of vampires, werewolves, mages and so on. Other games, including *Immortal*, have followed a similar line.

There are a number of SF and space opera games with more or less fantastical elements. West End's *Star Wars* catches the style of the films very well, complete with the quasi-magical Force; TSR had a couple of relevant supplements for its *Amazing Engine* system, along with the *AD&D* in space set-up of *Spelljammer*; and the new *Fading Suns* has a medievalised far future.

THIS MONTH IN GAMES

THE HEART OF DARKNESS...

We're moving rapidly towards winter, a notoriously slow period in the roleplaying hobby as far as new releases go, and yet, it seems, that this year there's no sign of slowing – as you can see this month, we've got a huge stack of new products for you to read about, and from what we've got piling up in the office already, it looks like next month's going to be no different. Better get those Christmas lists written.

***Deadlands* review on page 60**
It's dark, it's grim, and despite that it's rather fun.

Warhammer on page 66
When two tribes go to war, there's a lot of blood spilled, apparently.

THE SCORES

Everything reviewed in **arcane** gets a mark out of **10**. Here's a guide to what the individual marks represent...

10 Perfect. There's simply nothing better.
9 Excellent, a classic. Highly recommended.
8 Very good, with few problems. Recommended.
7 Good, but not exceptional.
6 Above average, but not without problems.
5 Average, or a mixture of good and bad.
4 Below average, but not without merit.
3 Poor, crucially flawed in some way.
2 Very poor, should be avoided.
1 Appallingly bad, no redeeming features at all.

arcane SEAL OF APPROVAL

Each month we fight and argue among ourselves to select that one extra-special product most deserving of your money and the coveted **arcane** accolade.

Mirage on page 64
The latest *Magic: The Gathering* expansion gets decked.

HârnMaster on page 68
The age-old fantasy system is back.

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71 Champions: BloodFury
60 Deadlands
70 Dragon Dice Batle Box
76 Dragon Dice: The Feral
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THE ICONS

Each review in **arcane** is identified with a rather nifty icon showing what kind of game it is. Here's what they mean:

Books and supplements

Dice games and expansions

Board games, miniature systems

Roleplaying systems

Collectable card games and expansions

Computer games and utilities

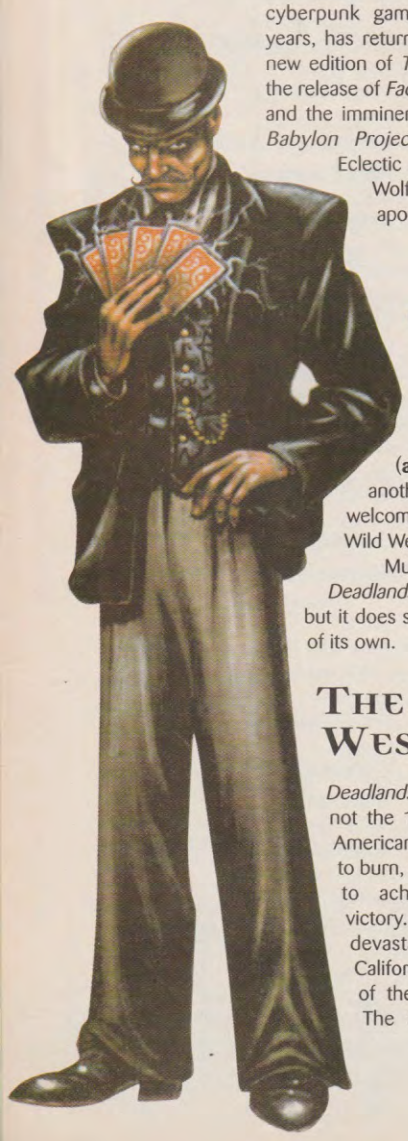
Deadlands

The wild west gets very strange in pinnacle entertainment's new roleplaying system.

LOOKING BACK

Probably the most popular Western roleplaying game of the 1980s, when the genre was very popular, was *Boot Hill*. Old hands who've been hanging on to their books will find a lot of them just as useful for *Deadlands*.

So far, 1996 seems to have become the year of revivals in roleplaying games. Science fiction, a genre that had all but faded away in the wake of the cyberpunk games of the last few years, has returned in force with the new edition of *Traveller* (**arcane** 10), the release of *Fading Suns* (**arcane** 11) and the imminent arrival of both the *Babylon Project* from Chameleon Eclectic and *Exile* from White Wolf. Likewise, the post-apocalyptic genre made a come-back recently with *Blood Dawn* (**arcane** 12). Now another genre has made a welcome reappearance – the Wild West.



Much like *Blood Dawn*, *Deadlands* revives this genre, but it does so with a unique twist of its own.

The Weird West

Deadlands is set in 1876, but not the 1876 of history. The American Civil War continues to burn, with neither side able to achieve a conclusive victory. A massive quake has devastated the whole of California, throwing much of the land into the sea. The Sioux Nations have rested control of the Dakotas from the white man. And strange tales are told in hushed whispers – tales of evil spirits, mythical monsters and dead men climbing from the grave.

The basic premise of *Deadlands* is that in 1863 an insane, revenge-driven Indian shaman lead his party of followers into the spirit world and released the Manitous upon the world. These evil spirits had been bound for hundreds of years by the efforts of the Old Ones, a band of ancient shaman who had sacrificed themselves in the Great Spirit War of the Middle Ages. Freed once more they plague the world, inciting the fear and terror which feeds their dark masters.

Players in *Deadlands* take on the roles of heroes fighting against this threat to humanity. To start with they won't know what's really going on, and may be unwilling saviours at best. But as the game develops they will learn more and more about the forces they fight, and the danger they pose to the entire world.

"In no time at all, players are referring to other characters as 'low dahn cheatin' varmints', to their guns as 'ma trusty shootin' iron' and so on."

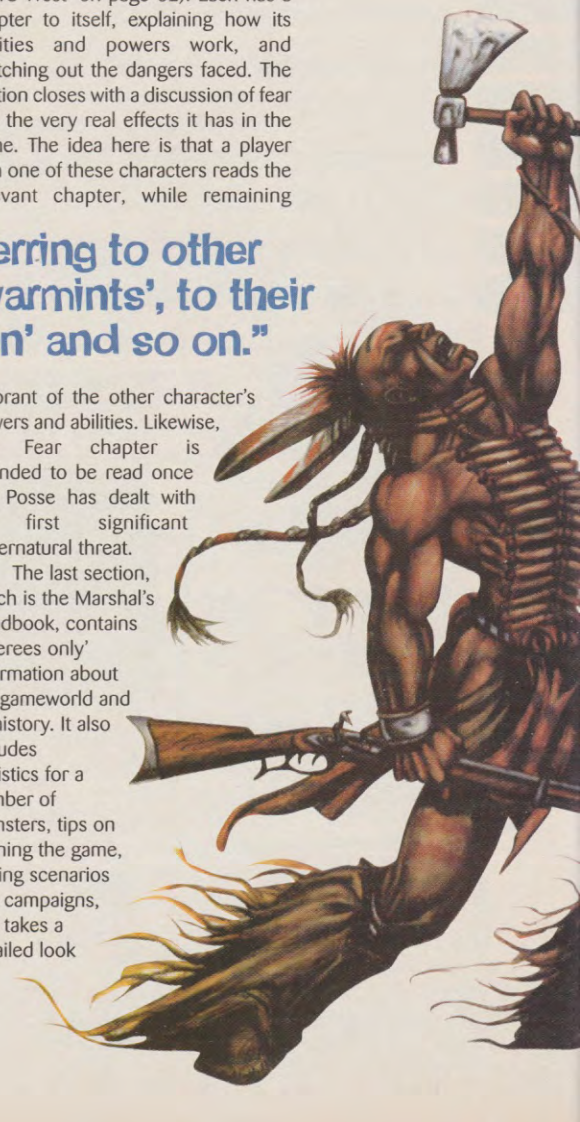
The Wisdom of the Ages

Deadlands is a 224-page book, available in either soft or hardcover. It's well laid out and designed, being clear and easy to read and making good use of tables, charts and examples. The rules themselves are split into three main sections, each of which is split into chapters dealing with specific aspects of the game.

The first and largest section, Posse Territory, is aimed at the players of the game, and covers the basics of the system itself, character generation, the combat system, and has a brief chapter introducing players to the concepts of Fate Chips (see 'When the chips are down' opposite) and Bounty Points (experience).

Next comes No Man's Land. Each of the chapters here deals with one of the 'special' character types available in the game – Hucksters, Mad Scientists, The Blessed, Shamans and The Harrowed (see 'Heroes of the Weird West' on page 62). Each has a chapter to itself, explaining how its abilities and powers work, and sketching out the dangers faced. The section closes with a discussion of fear and the very real effects it has in the game. The idea here is that a player with one of these characters reads the relevant chapter, while remaining ignorant of the other character's powers and abilities. Likewise, the Fear chapter is intended to be read once the Posse has dealt with its first significant supernatural threat.

The last section, which is the Marshal's Handbook, contains 'referees only' information about the gameworld and its history. It also includes statistics for a number of monsters, tips on running the game, writing scenarios and campaigns, and takes a detailed look



at a number of concepts not fully explained in the players' sections.

Rolling the bones

Deadlands uses an interesting game system which combines elements from several other RPGs with some unique concepts.

Characters are basically defined by 10 traits – Deftness, Nimbleness, Quickness, Strength, Vigor, Cognition, Knowledge, Mien, Smarts and Spirit. These are rated by a dice code, ranging (for normal humans) from a D4 to a D12. Traits are also paired with a Co-ordination, representing the number of dice that are rolled, ranging from 1 to 4. So, for example, someone with a Strength of D6 and Co-ordination of 3 would roll 3D6 in a test of muscle power.

Characters also have Aptitudes, or skills, which work in a similar way to Co-ordination. Each Aptitude possessed by a character is initially rated from 1 to 5, and this number is paired with a Trait to determine the number and type of dice rolled. So, for example, a gunslinger character with a Shootin': Pistol Aptitude of 5 and a Deftness of D10 would roll 5D10 when trying to plug a bad guy with his trusty Colt Peacemaker. Although each Aptitude is normally associated with a Trait – Shootin' with Deftness, for example – they can be paired with different ones as and when the situation requires.

When attempting a task of some kind the player rolls the relevant dice, according to Aptitude and Trait, against a Difficulty number set by the referee. To succeed, the highest result must beat the Difficulty.

Any dice that roll the maximum for their type – an 'Ace' – are re-rolled, allowing characters a chance at even very difficult tasks. In addition, for every full five points by which you beat the Difficulty, you get an extra success, or 'Raise'. The more Raises achieved, the better the success – in combat, for example, each Raise allows the player to modify the roll for hit location.

On the other hand, if more than half the dice rolled come up '1s', the character has 'gone bust', and fumbles the task in some dramatic way decided by the referee.

For example, let's say our gunslinger is shooting someone in

ON THE WAY
An impressive line-up of supplements for *Deadlands* is already in the works, including a book on Harrowed characters and even specially designed decks of playing cards.

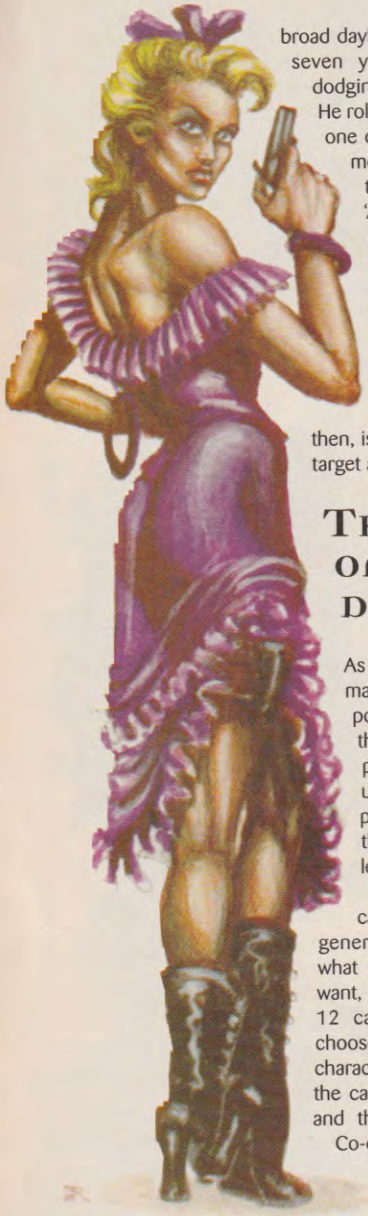
when the chips are down

As well as dice and playing cards, *Deadlands* also makes use of poker chips. To play you need 25 white, 25 red and 10 blue chips. At the start of the game these are thrown into a big pot and mixed up. At the start of each session, each player and the referee draws three chips at random from the pot.

These 'Fate' chips represent the fickle power of destiny, and can be used in a variety of ways. White chips are the least powerful, blue chips the most. Chips can be spent to improve a Trait or Aptitude roll, reduce or ignore damage, or they can be traded in for Bounty Points, which in turn are used to increase Aptitudes, Traits and Co-ordinations. The more powerful the chip, the more the character is drawing on the powers of destiny to help him or her, and the greater the effect.

As well as the three chips drawn at the start of each session, characters can 'save up' chips from previous games, and the referee can award them for good roleplaying by the players. Players can also trade chips between them, representing one character helping another in some way. If the players manage to defeat a particularly powerful enemy, a special 'Legend' chip is added to the pot, which grants bonuses to the character that draws it.

Using poker chips to keep track of 'luck', instead of writing it down somewhere, is a neat gimmick which helps to reinforce the atmosphere of *Deadlands*, and offers a pleasant tactile prop for the players. It's a simple idea, but a very effective one. Although they can be hard to find in Britain, it's well worth the effort of tracking some down.



broad daylight. The target is only seven yards away and isn't dodging, so the Difficulty is 5. He rolls 5D10, and as long as one of the dice scores 5 or more, he hits. If any of the dice rolls a 10 – an 'Ace' – he rolls again and totals the result. If three or more of the dice roll 1s, he goes bust. Suppose he rolls 1, 6, 3, 10, 10. Both 10s are Aces, and are re-rolled, getting 8 and 3. His highest roll, then, is 18 (10+8). He hits his target and gets two Raises.

The Luck of the Draw

As well as dice, *Deadlands* makes use of cards and poker chips (see 'When the chips are down' on page 61). The cards used are standard playing cards, with both the red and black jokers left in the deck.

The first use of cards is during character generation. After deciding what kind of character they want, players deal themselves 12 cards from which they choose 10 to assign to their character's Traits. The value of the card determines the Trait, and the suit determines the Co-ordination, with the suits ranked as in Poker – Spades are highest, and so give a Co-ordination of 4, while Clubs are lowest, with a Co-ordination of 1. A joker counts as an Ace, giving a Trait of D12, and another card is then drawn for Co-ordination, but they also signify that the player has a 'mysterious past' of some form, which is determined by the referee.

The rest of the character generation process is then based on a points system. The total of the character's Knowledge, Smarts and Cognition is used to buy Aptitudes (so a character with D6, D4, and D10 would have 20 points). Characters can then choose up to 10 points' worth of Hindrances, from a selection that includes such gems as 'Yeller', 'Mean as a Rattler' and 'Big Britches'. The points earned can then be used to buy more Aptitudes, or buy Edges such as 'Tough as Nails', 'Purty' or 'Luck of the Irish'. Alternatively, if this sounds like too much work, there's a wide selection of pre-generated Archetypes to choose from, all of which can be used straight out of the book.

During play, two decks of cards are required, one for the referee and one for the players. These 'Action Decks' are used to determine initiative in combat. At the start of each round, each character rolls their Speed Trait against a Difficulty of 5. Players draw one card, plus an additional card for a success in the check, and a further card for each Raise. The cards drawn represent how many actions the character has in the round, and when they occur. The referee begins to count down from ace to deuce, and when one of your cards comes up, you act. You can also hold a card 'up your sleeve', allowing you to interrupt another character's action.

Finally, some special character types, Hucksters and Mad Scientists, require a separate deck which is used to determine the effects of their special abilities (see 'Heroes of the Weird West' below).

The Big Showdown

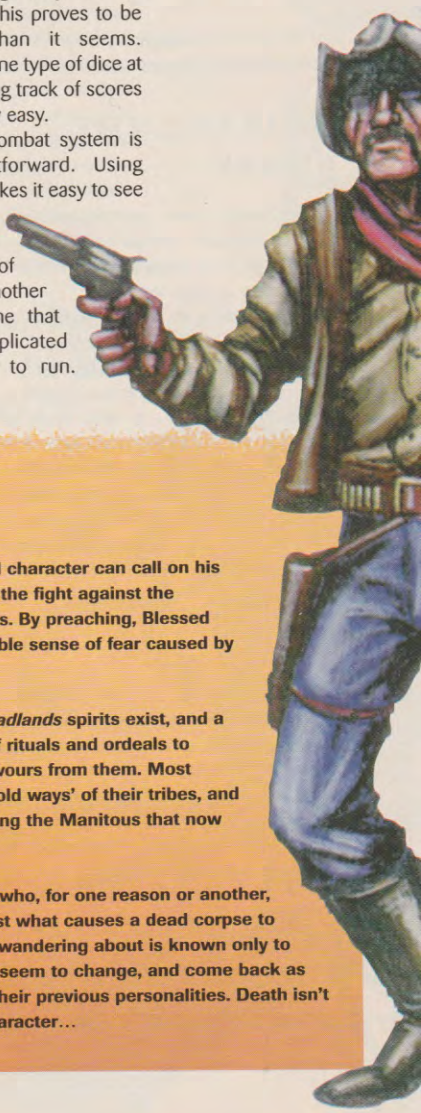
Deadlands is a very interesting game, and more importantly, it's great fun. The rules themselves are well-designed, and although they use lots of dice, during play this proves to be less of a pain than it seems. Characters only roll one type of dice at a time, and so keeping track of scores and totals is relatively easy.

Likewise, the combat system is remarkably straightforward. Using cards for initiative makes it easy to see who acts and when – you just line the cards up in front of you in order. It's another simple idea, but one that makes big, complicated fights much easier to run.

ERRATA ALERT

Predictably, considering that it's the first printing of the game, *Deadlands* does suffer from a few errors and omissions. Luckily a full list is already available on the Pinnacle World Wide Web site.

"Pinnacle Entertainment has laid a solid foundation for a superb system... *Deadlands* could easily become a major success in 1997."



Heroes of the Weird West

As well as all the traditional Western character types – gunslingers, marshals, prospectors and so on – the Weird West of *Deadlands* offers some characters unique to its setting...

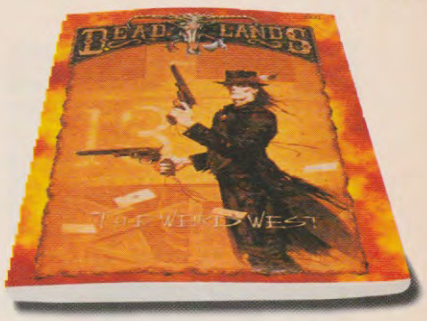
Hucksters are magicians who have deciphered the arcane formulae hidden in Hoyle's Book of Games and use them to cast spells, or 'hexes'. Most Hucksters use poker to symbolise the process of harnessing magical energy, and so Huckster players use a deck of playing cards to cast hexes. The aim is to create a poker hand, and the higher scoring the hand, the more potent the spell.

Mad Scientists are inventors who create bizarre new contraptions and items. When California fell into the sea, vast seams of a new mineral were uncovered. This 'ghost rock' burns very hot and very slowly, allowing for incredibly powerful steam engines and other new technology. Mad Scientists harness this power for their own warped designs. In play they use a deck of cards to create new inventions.

The Blessed are priests and preachers of unshakeable faith and belief. Just as evil is very real in *Deadlands*, so is the power of good. Through devout prayers and other rituals, a Blessed character can call on his deity for divine aid and miracles to help in the fight against the monstrous creatures that lurk in the wastes. By preaching, Blessed characters can also help alleviate the terrible sense of fear caused by such abominations.

Shamans are Indian medicine men. In *Deadlands* spirits exist, and a Shaman learns how to perform all kinds of rituals and ordeals to appease nature spirits and gain various favours from them. Most Shamans are dedicated to upholding the 'old ways' of their tribes, and are just as dedicated to the task of defeating the Manitous that now plague the world.

The Harrowed are characters who, for one reason or another, cannot find peace in death. Just what causes a dead corpse to crawl out of the grave and start wandering about is known only to the referee – but some Harrowed seem to change, and come back as evil monsters, while others retain their previous personalities. Death isn't always the end for a *Deadlands* character...



Even the game's character sheets are cleverly designed, allowing players to keep track of ammo, wounds and wind (fatigue) by sliding paper clips along the edges of the sheet.

What really makes *Deadlands* stand out, though, is the setting and the atmosphere it creates. The combination of classic Westerns, horror and a dash of steampunk works very well. The best Westerns have a mythical quality to them already, and so the addition of supernatural creatures and evil spirits is less jarring than in many games that make an attempt to blend two or more genres.

The effort that's gone into creating the right feel is obvious throughout the rules. Everything, from the names of the skills – Shootin' instead of Guns, Filchin' instead of Pick Pockets – to the headings of the various sections of the rules – Skedaddlin', Drawin' a Bead, El Cheapo Gear – has been designed to both create and promote the right mind-set for the game. Likewise, the terms used in play – Aces, Raises, Gone Bust and so on – all help to push the players and the referee into the right frame of mind, as does the use of poker chips and playing cards. In no time at all, players are referring to other characters as "low dahn cheatin' varmints", to their guns as "ma trusty shootin' iron" and so on. Again, this is a simple, obvious technique, but it's one that works wonders when actually playing.

There are a couple of problems with *Deadlands* as it stands, though. First of all, although the book sketches out the setting in a very visual manner, giving you a clear idea of what the Weird West is like, it's very short on details. Similarly the referee's section, while giving you everything you really *need* to run the game, doesn't go into much depth about what it covers.

While there's little doubt that the missing information will be covered in future supplements (several of which are referred to), it does mean that the game alone is not particularly suited to novice referees. Running *Deadlands* as it stands will require a fair amount of work on the ref's behalf – there's not even an introductory adventure to get you started.

The other problem lies in the organisation of the book. The way it's split into three sections is yet another simple but effective idea. But it does mean that the rules covering certain aspects of the game are spread throughout the book. Combined with the lack of an index, this can make it hard to find what you need during play – the full rules for fate chips, for example, are split between three chapters. Some effort has been made to overcome this problem, by using icons that direct you to the relevant section, and the 'Table O' Contents' is pleasantly detailed, but an index would still make things handier.

None of these problems are enough to cast more than a passing shadow on what is a great game and a welcome return of a forgotten genre, though. With the *Deadlands* rulebook, Pinnacle has laid a solid foundation for a superb system. Providing the company continues to support it, and the supplements maintain the same high standards as the basic rules, *Deadlands* could easily become a major success in 1997.

INSPIRING WORKS

A *Deadlands* referee could get ideas from any Western, but the later films in the 'man with no name' series from Sergio Leone, with their slightly supernatural feel, are probably the best.

VITAL INFO

title:	*Deadlands*
system:	a roleplaying game
price:	£16.95 (hardcover £19.95)
publisher:	Pinnacle Entertainment
	001 540 951 3749
released:	out now
e-mail:	Deadlands@aol.com
web site:	http://www.peginc.com/

And the players said...

PAUL: "The Weird West is one of the best new settings I've come across in years."

STEVE: "Great fun to read and great fun to play – a great game."

JOHN: "To start with I wasn't sure that it'd work – but it does."

Also available...

There aren't really any other systems comparable to *Deadlands*, which is one of its appeals. The nearest is *Castle Falkenstein* using the *Six Guns & Sorcery* supplement, but the styles of the games are quite different. Looking forward, there's *Werewolf: The Wild West* from White Wolf, but that's yet to be released...

The Final Verdict

"A wonderfully effective combination of traditional Westerns with the horror and steampunk genres, backed up by an innovative and well-designed rules system that not only complements the setting, but actively promotes the right atmosphere. *Deadlands* is a rich, evocative and unique roleplaying game that should appeal to a great variety of players. Excellent stuff."

Andy Butcher

Score 9/10

Mirage

Femeref Knight
Flanking (Whenever a creature without flanking is assigned to block this creature, the blocking creature gets -1/-1 until end of turn.)
: Attacking does not cause Femeref Knight to tap this turn.
"I will return / with hazard skins for your sandals. Paint your eyes black and wait for me."
—"Love Song of Night and Day"
2/2
: Add to your mana
Blistering

Mirage brings more cards to *Magic*, but is its quality more tangible than its name would suggest?

NEW COLOURS? Before its release, there were rumours that the *Mirage* set would introduce an entirely new colour of magic to the game. We can reveal here that this is untrue – there is still only blue, red, green, white and black.

Alliances was, by far, the best expansion set to be released for *Magic: The Gathering* since the immensely collectable *Arabian Nights* set of 1994. It powered up a flagging *Magic* market, and brought a collection of cards to the game which every serious player just *had* to have. Helm of Obedience, Balduvian Horde, Keeper of Tresserhorn... The list of vital rares is enough to empty the wallets of many a *Magic* fiend. It is amazing, then, that just four months after the release of *Alliances*, Wizards of the Coast has released a stand-alone expansion which makes even *Alliances* look like a half-arsed attempt at turbo-charging the most famous of collectable card games.

Haunting Apparition
Summon Ghost
Flying
Haunting Apparition has power equal to 1 plus the number of creature cards in target opponent's graveyard.
Illus. Chippy
Chaos Charm
Choose one — Target creature is unaffected by summoning sickness this turn; or Chaos Charm deals 1 damage to target creature; or destroy target Wall.
Phasing
"We've run aground sandbars before, but today, a sandbar ran aground us."
—Kiphemboi, Kukemssa pirate
6/5

Grab a *Mirage* starter deck (60 cards, plus revised rulebook) or a booster (15 cards), and the first thing that strikes you is just how good the cards look. We hinted at the graphical quality of the *Mirage* set back in **arcane** 10, the month after we presented you with three preview cards (both **arcane** 10 and 11 are still available as back issues – turn to page 53 to order them), but even we weren't prepared for the quite staggeringly supreme job that the artists have managed to do on the final release product.

But art, smart as it may be, is not what a new expansion for *Magic* is all about. No, it's the way that the game (as a stand-alone) plays, and how it integrates into, and adds to, the core set of *Magic* cards already available. Playing 'straight' *Mirage* decks is much like playing straight *Ice Age* creations – it's faster than 'ordinary' *Magic* because stalemates are less common (there are ways and means of giving yourself the edge, drawing yourself out of no-win situations and getting a grip back on the game). There are, as you're no doubt aware, new rules for phasing and flanking (new creature abilities, in much the same way that first strike and banding are abilities which creatures have possessed since the game's conception). As you would expect these add new levels to the gameplay, especially phasing which in most cases is a hindrance rather than a benefit – it effectively enables you to use a permanent only once every other turn (the flip side of which is that if a permanent destruction effect is played when a permanent is 'phased out', such as Armageddon or Wrath of God, those phased out permanents survive). The flanking rule makes those creatures who possess the ability that much harder to deal with (if blocked the defending creature gets -1/-1 unless it also has flanking), but the casting cost for such creatures is

TRAMPLING Get a 12/12 trampling creature out for just one colourless mana by casting the Phyrexian Dreadnought (just make sure you've got plenty of creatures to satisfy its hunger).

VISIONS The first expansion set for the *Mirage* collection of cards is due in January, and as we have previously reported in **arcane**, it's to be called *Visions*. We'll be carrying two preview cards with **arcane** 15, on sale Friday 27th December.

Do believe your eyes

There are some cards in the *Mirage* set which will rapidly establish themselves as 'must haves'. Yes, most of them are rares, but that's not always the case, so you should be able to get at least a few of these by only buying a couple of packs.

Prismatic Circle

Prismatic Circle
Cumulative upkeep
When you play Prismatic Circle, choose a color.
: Prevent all damage to you from a source of the chosen color. Treat further damage from that source normally.

It has cumulative upkeep, but it's effectively a Circle of Protection for all colours.

Jolrael's Centaur

Jolrael's Centaur
Summon Centaur
Flanking (Whenever a creature without flanking is assigned to block this creature, the blocking creature gets -1/-1 until end of turn.)
Jolrael's Centaur cannot be the target of spells or effects.
"What need have I for cavalry when I can have horse and rider both in one?"
—Jolrael
2/2

A major league creature this one. It has flanking, and it can't be the object of spells.

Chaosphere

Chaosphere
Creatures with flying cannot block creatures without flying.
Creatures without flying can block creatures with flying.
"I dance the nothing dance, I feet in the air, knives in the ground."
—Power of chant

Say goodbye to all of those awkward flying creatures – now you can block the lot.

suitably higher. If you start using flanking creatures, it's worth looking for a rare legend called Telim 'Tor, which gives all attacking flanking creatures a further +1/+1 – expect this to be one of the much sought after cards in the set.

Does *Magic* need these additional rules? Well, that's debatable – they do add a further level of complication (especially in the case of phasing, because if you have a number of phasing permanents, you can become confused about which are phasing in or out during any given turn). However, once you're used to working with these new rules, they make the overall game more subtle, opening up uses for cards in previous sets which you may have never thought about using before. So, it's a thumbs up for phasing and flanking, just don't expect to be clear about their uses immediately.

Ray of Command
Untap target creature an opponent controls and gain control of it until end of turn. That creature is unaffected by summoning sickness this turn. Tap the creature if you lose control of it at end of this turn.
"Heel."

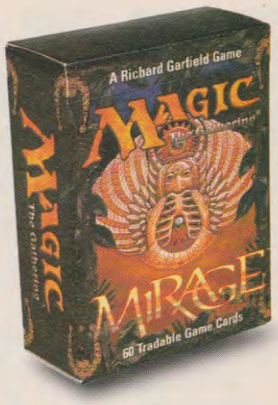
Another bonus in the *Mirage* set is the extremely low number of 'stock' cards (these are common cards which make their way into most releases). There are no Circles of Protection, no Fireballs, no Lightning Bolts and no Giant Growths or Counterspells. Of course, that's not to say you won't find any familiar cards – there are Dark Rituals, Incinerates, Power Sinks and a few others – but overall there are fewer stock cards than in the *Ice Age* stand-alone expansion. And that makes playing straight *Mirage* games less predictable and therefore more fun.

Long-standing *Magic* players will be interested to see a number of cards which bear remarkable similarity to the 'over-power' cards of the pre-limited edition release. There is an artefact for each of the colour types which emulates the power of the infamous Moxes (only now they cost two mana to play and come in tapped), and there's even a Black Lotus equivalent which costs nothing to play and gives you three colourless mana when discarded – the drawback is that when you bring it into play you've got to then discard your entire hand. I think that these cards have been brought in to level the playing field to some extent, by making Mox-like and Lotus-like cards available to the masses, not just those fortunate (and somewhat stupid) players who can afford to spend £1,000 on a set of Moxes and a Lotus. These cards have been very well balanced, however, so no-one can accuse Wizards of the Coast of simply upping the ante and introducing more super-powered spells.

Like *Alliances*, *Mirage* has managed to bring more to the game of *Magic* than any previous, post-1994 expansion set – yes, *Ice Age* was good, but this is a lot better, and every *Magic* player should look towards buying a decent number of the cards. *Mirage* is, amazingly, superior to even *Alliances*. It has better art, it has more cards which may encourage you to use cards from earlier sets in combination, and it has a more complete feel to it (which is only to be expected – it is a stand-alone set, after all). To miss out on *Mirage* would be a grave mistake – it's only going to be around for a year before Wizards of the Coast stops printing it, and I wholeheartedly encourage you to buy and to continue buying until you get your Urborg Panther, your Feral Shadow, your Breathstealer and the mighty Spirit of the Night. Once you've got them, you'll see why.

"*Mirage* has managed to bring more to the game of *Magic* than any previous, post-1994 expansion set."

Ivory Charm
Choose one — All creatures get −2/−0 until end of turn; or prevent 1 damage to any creature or player; or tap target creature.
Sabertooth Cobra
Summon Cobra
If Sabertooth Cobra damages a player, he or she gets a poison counter. During that player's next upkeep, he or she gets another poison counter unless he or she pays 2 before then to prevent this effect. If any player has ten or more poison counters, he or she loses the game.
Illus. Andrew Robinson
2/2



VITAL INFO

title:	*Mirage*
system:	a stand-alone expansion for *Magic: The Gathering*
price:	£7.95 per 60-card starter, £2.25 per 15-card booster
publisher:	Wizards of the Coast
	0345 125599
released:	out now
e-mail:	uk@wizards.com
web site:	http://wotc.ukonline.co.uk/

And the players said...

ANDY: "Another good expansion set, but how many *Magic* cards do you really *need?*"

STEVE: "It's good, very good, and I can't wait to play more games with it."

FIONA: "The artwork's a lot better than *Alliances*, especially the new lands."

Also available...

If *Mirage* is your thing, you should also check out the other *Magic: The Gathering* expansion sets. The most recent (which you should still find on sale) are:
Ice Age (June 1995)
Chronicles (August 1995)
Homelands (February 1996), and
Alliances (July 1996)

The Final Verdict

"This is a superb expansion to the *Magic* multiverse, with new rules which add greater depth to the game, better artwork than any previous set, and enough new cards to make it fully playable as a stand-alone."

Paul Pettengale

Score 9/10

Marble Diamond

Marble Diamond
Artifact
Marble Diamond comes into play tapped.
: Add * to your mana pool. Play this ability as a mana source.
Illus. Jeff Miracola

One of the new mini-Moxes. This one creates white mana on demand.

Bone Harvest

Bone Harvest
Instant
Put any number of target creature cards from your graveyard on top of your library.
Draw a card at the beginning of the next turn's upkeep.
"Only fools believe they will face my armies but once." —Kaervek
Illus. Greg Simanson

Get a creature straight back into your hand, and know what you've got coming...

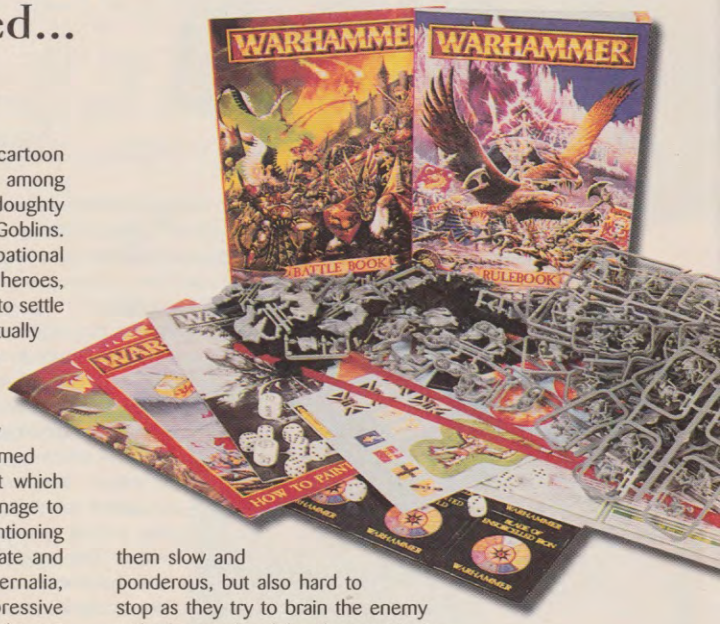
Meddle

Meddle
Interrupt
Target spell, which targets a single creature, targets another creature of your choice instead. The new target must be legal.
"Shadimir was as surprised as he was relieved when the blow turned aside." —Afari, Tales

Just like Deflection, only you can't deflect spells back at players. And it's cheap.

Warhamme

it's shiny, new and improved... it's great new *warhammer*.



NEW EDITION
This is the fifth edition of *Warhammer*. The original version first appeared in 1979 and has proved quite a stud, spawning the best titles *(Blood Bowl, Necromunda* and *Warhammer 40000)* in the Games Workshop stable.

Warhammer is the new game release from Games Workshop – and yet at one and the same time it's also a very old game from Games Workshop. No matter, the old ones are often the best and *Warhammer* is undoubtedly a classic of its type. The question is, will the facelift make it any new friends?

It is a table-top, miniatures-powered wargame that pitches fantasy armies against each other in a sword and sorcery world inspired by Tolkein, classic mythology and medieval history. Extensive source material sketches out an almost cartoon fantasy world populated by among others haughty Elves, doughty Dwarves, barbaric Orcs and Goblins. Epic battles are an occupational hazard in a land chocka with heroes, wizards and dragons all trying to settle their differences at some mutually acceptable mountain pass or fortified citadel. Life is cheap, even if *Warhammer* is not.

However, for your money you do get an unfeasibly crammed box, full of warmongering kit which once opened you'll never manage to pack away again. Scarcely mentioning all the associated dice, template and cardboard building paraphernalia, the most impressive components of the set are the miniatures of the two incumbent armies involved – the Lizardmen and Bretonnians.

The Lizardmen are bipedal dinosauroids, with brains the size of poppadoms, and come in two distinct flavours. Firstly there are the Saurus types, who are the muscle of the army. They're as dull as Hull and their reptilian nervous system makes them slow and ponderous, but also hard to stop as they try to brain the enemy with the crude clubs they made in woodwork class. They are aided and abetted by the Skinks, physically small creatures that nevertheless come in handy for peppering the enemy with their bows.

The Bretonnians, however, are a little closer to home, being a human army. The bulk of their forces are the peasant levy who fulfil the same function as the Skinks, namely hanging about at the back showering the advancing foe with arrows before they get butchered in hand-to-hand combat. The Bretonnian knights, on the other hand, are a fine order of Sir

A LACK OF MAGIC
Warhammer's magic system gets only a cursory glance in the boxed set. To fully indulge in the Way of the Sorcerer you'll have to wait for the *Warhammer Magic* supplement, due out in December.

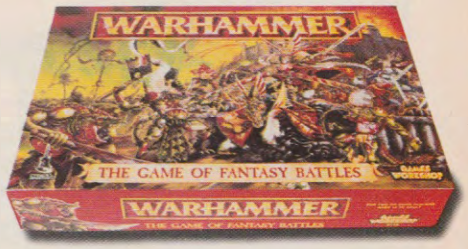
FRIENDS OF LIZARDMEN
Among the releases planned for the Lizardmen are a triceratops war beast with a howdah and rider, and a flying creature most simply described as a Pterodactyl.

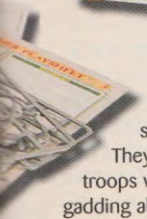
oh no! not again...

Progress. It just won't stop, and so it is that four years after the last edition we have *Warhammer 5* on our hands. Unlike all the previous overhauls, the majority of the game rules have been left largely untouched. However, there have been some significant tweaks which undoubtedly improve the game along the margins. Placed end to end, however, the new rules would only amount to a few pages which seems poor value for £50, especially as the whole lot could have been reproduced in *White Dwarf* (the summary in issue 202 was incomplete) costing £3.

Unless you're tempted by the thought of investing in an army of Lizardmen or Bretonnians, any seasoned *Warhammer* veteran will have long outgrown the need for any of the rest of the bundle, no matter that it's slightly glossier than before. The ideal solution, then, would be to just ring mail order for the rulebooks alone, but the fiendish Games Workshop won't be selling them separately for over a year. This move can only be interpreted as a predatory ploy, because no-one in their right mind would pay £50 for a fraction of a manual they already own, except perhaps a passionate hobbyist.

PLAY TO WIN
International *Warhammer* tournaments are now staged in Italy, the US and officially in the UK by Games Workshop. The winner of this year's prestigious home event was an Italian.





Galahads with lovely little antlers and things sticking out of their helmets. They are the Bretonnian shock troops who like nothing more than gadding about the battlefield on their steeds kebabing jumped-up Komodo dragons with their powerful lances.

In all, that makes for 88 models which are, frankly, the best plastic miniatures I have ever seen. Of course using them requires reading the rules, which is a daunting task given the size of the two bloated rulebooks. Fortunately, the bulk of them aren't necessary at this stage (I'll come back to that) and GW is by now adept at providing play sheets and quick start guides so that soon enough all your men are built and neatly arranged in ranks to form little regiments. Before long the simple GW formula of tape measures, generic stats and dice has you wheeling your forces about the table in a fast-moving game of wholesale slaughter as the combatants engage with almost indecent haste. It's all quite amusing as bowmen make pincushions out of the oncoming mêlée troops, and decisive victories are won in hand-to-hand bloodbaths as one side cracks and flees. And of course it all looks splendid.

"Epic battles are an occupational hazard in a land chocka with heroes, wizards and dragons... Life is cheap, even if *Warhammer* is not."

But herein lies the crux of the problem. After just a couple of evenings of this it all seems a bit limited. Just a question of rushing in the hard guys while the archers stand and shoot and everyone chucks bucketfuls of dice about. Tactically it's stunted. Not half as exciting as the pictures in the book of stone-throwing trolls, rock-lobbing catapults and hordes of skeletons doing battle with musket-bearing dwarves. And on reading the book you realise that potentially this game offers almost limitless variation with its rules for battle chariots, manticores and so on.

Unfortunately this boxed set only provides a spoonful of *Warhammer*, carefully prepared to pique your tastebuds and leave you hungry for more. It is, essentially, bait designed to reel you into a vast hobby. A great deal of the manual's contents are concerned with where you can take *Warhammer* once you've exhausted the possibilities of the figures in the box – and that won't take long. There are basic notes on every aspect from the range of races available to campaign ideas to painting guides. But buying *Warhammer* is a risk you should way up carefully – no game is an island, but that's never been more true than in this case.

If you're touched by the idea of collecting, building and refining vast armies of miniatures, then *Warhammer* could be one of the best value purchases you ever make, leading to years of absorption into a colourful, fun and compulsive game/hobby/life-leeching beast of enormous depth. On the other hand, if you just fancy a quick, self-contained, mildly tactical game, then I say reject this out of hand, try *Necromunda* or *Space Hulk* instead.

VITAL INFO

title:	*Warhammer*
system:	a fantasy wargame
price:	£50
publisher:	Games Workshop
	01773 713213
released:	out now
web site:	http://www.games-workshop.com/

And the players said...

JEREMY: "Good game, but you need extra miniatures almost straight away."

TONY: "The most comprehensive intro to a wargame I have ever seen."

JAMES: "*Warhammer* will hurt your wallet, but in a nice way."

Also available...

There are far too many fantasy wargames to list them all here, although few have proved as successful as *Warhammer*. You might try *Raven* from Harlequin, or there's always *Warhammer 40,000* if you fancy something a little more futuristic.

The Final Verdict

"This is an excellent launch pad into a virtually bottomless wargames system with a great background."

Mark Donald

Score 7/10

HârnMaster

2nd Edition

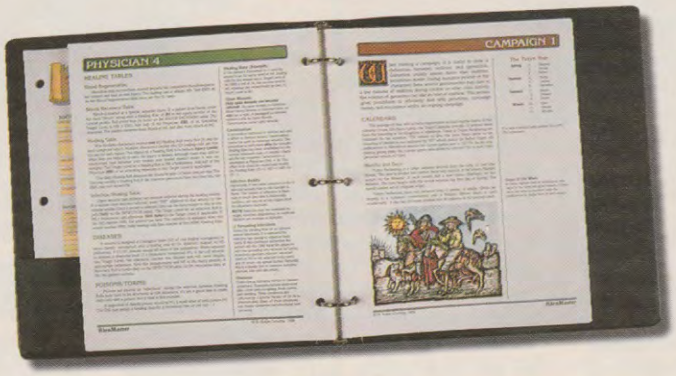
Ten years after its original release, Columbia Games' fantasy roleplaying system gets a facelift...

As far as popularity goes, roleplaying games are a lot like bands. Some roleplaying games are instant hits but fade away in a matter of months, others just go from strength to strength, and some never make it very far at all. In addition, there's the odd system that just bubbles under, attracting a core of dedicated players, but never really making it into the limelight.

HârnMaster from Columbia Games is one of the latter. Originally released in 1986, the game reflected the wargaming roots of the company. The system was complex, but logically structured, and made a serious attempt at creating an authentic medieval atmosphere. It was never a big seller, but has continued to support a growing range of supplements and sourcebooks.

For this new edition, the entire system has been completely re-written and revised, with a greater emphasis on ease of use. Although the rules are largely unchanged, they have been restructured into a simpler core system, with many of the original rules relegated to optional status. Not only does this make the game easier to learn and understand, it gives referees the chance to customise the level of detail used in their games. Considering just how detailed this system can be, this is a very good thing indeed.

In addition to the re-write, the game's format has also been radically altered, resulting in one of the best presented roleplaying systems around. Rather than the traditional hard or softcover book, *HârnMaster 2nd Edition* takes the form of a ring-binder. The rules are printed in full colour on wonderfully thick paper that almost crosses the boundaries of thin card, and the layout and design is clear and easy to read. In addition, the rules are split into chapter-like 'modules', enabling referees to organise them within the binder as they see fit. You even get a pad of full colour character sheets. Forthcoming supplements will be presented in the same format, allowing parts of them to



THE LUCK OF THE DICE
Basic character generation in *Hârn* is almost entirely random – even the sex of the character is determined by the roll of a dice. An alternate, points-based system is also included, however, for those who want a little more control.

ALL IN THE MIND?
Although *HârnMaster* doesn't contain rules for magic or religion, it does feature a well-designed psionic system, which allows for a wide variety of powers.

IT'S INFECTIOUS
One of the many things that makes *HârnMaster* stand out from less 'gritty' fantasy systems are its healing rules, which include rules for infections and gangrene. Mmm.

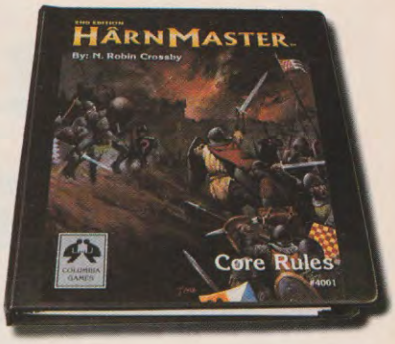
I'LL LAY A HEX ON YOU...
The wargaming roots of *HârnMaster* are most obvious in the combat system, which assumes that players will use lead miniatures and a hex grid during fights.

The world of Hârn

Although the basic mechanics of *HârnMaster* are fairly generic and could be used with a variety of settings, the game is intended to be played in Hârn itself. In keeping with the historical authenticity and detail of the game, Hârn is based heavily on Medieval Europe.

Like some better known fantasy worlds, such as Glorantha and Tekumel, Hârn has developed something of a cult following all of its own, quite separate from the game itself. Over the years since *HârnMaster's* original release, Columbia Games has been far from lazy, and there's a vast and impressive array of source material already available, describing many of the regions and cultures of Hârn in sometimes excruciating detail.

So even if the game system itself doesn't interest you, if you're looking for a fully realised world in which to set a new fantasy campaign Hârn might be the answer. Columbia has dedicated a great deal of time and effort to making it as 'real' a fantasy world as possible, with workable social, economic and political structures. Likewise, even factors such as the local environment and weather are taken into account – this is not a world in which every town has a local dungeon packed full of monsters who never do anything but wait for adventurers to happen along. If this is the style of game you like, or want to run but you don't have the time to create it all yourself, then check out some of the *HârnMaster* sourcebooks.



be slotted into the folder at the relevant points. So far, so good.

HârnMaster is based on a system similar in some ways to the Chaosium rules, but more complex and involved. Characters are basically defined by a number of attributes – Strength, Stamina, Dexterity, Agility, Eyesight, Hearing, Smell, Voice, Intelligence, Aura, Will, Morality, Piety, Comeliness and Endurance – most of which are generated by a roll of three six-sided dice. The exceptions are Piety, which begins at 5D6, Morality, which can be rolled on 3D6 or chosen, and Endurance, which is the most important combat statistic, and is the average of Strength, Stamina and Will.

In addition, characters possess a number of skills, all of which are rated on a percentage scale and split into categories – Physical, Communication, Craft/Lore, Combat and Language/ Scripts. There are also a number of magical and ritual skills, but this new edition of the game doesn't contain the rules for magicians or priests – they will be released as supplements.

When attempting to perform a task, the player has to roll less than the character's skill, modified depending on the skill and situation and as the referee sees fit for special circumstances. If the result of the D100 roll is less than the modified skill, the character is successful – if more, the character fails. Any successful roll ending in a 0 or 5 is a critical success, any failed roll ending in a 0 or 5 is a critical failure. So, a character with a skill of 50 in Sword would get a critical success on a roll of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 or 50, and so on.

Character generation is a fairly involved process in *HârnMaster*. As well as the numerical attributes, a character's race, sex, birth date (and sunsign), birthplace, culture, social class, family background and relationships, height, build and weight are all generated randomly. In addition, optional rules allow for medical conditions, mental disorders and even sexuality to be determined. Finally, the character's occupation is generated. All characters start with certain automatic skills, the occupation then grants several more, and finally the player can choose to increase a few existing skills, or start some more.

A skill's basic rating is determined by the average of two or three characteristics modified by Sunsign, and a beginning character opens the skill at a multiple of that level. Sword, for example, is based on the average of Strength, and twice Dexterity, and a character trained as a Knight gains the skill at 4 times this 'Skill Base'.

Combat is similarly detailed. The attacker and defender choose their actions and make their skill rolls, then their success levels are compared via a series of tables, which specify the result. If a hit is scored, the location is generated on a table. The weapon's impact is compared to the armour protecting the location, and the result used to determine the severity of any wound. The wound's effects are then determined, and so on.

So, if you want a detailed fantasy RPG, *HârnMaster 2nd Edition* has a lot going for it. Although the system is fairly complex, it is logically structured, and the well written rules make it easy to absorb. Its detail also offers players a lot of options and control over their characters' actions.

If you've been reading our series on historical settings for roleplaying, and fancy giving one of them a try, *HârnMaster* would provide a good basis for such a game. Likewise, the game's 'standard' setting, Hârn, is well developed and supported.

What really lets it down, though, is the lack of rules for magic and religion. Given the game's glorious presentation, you could forgive its high price – except that these sections are missing. It would have been better to drop the psionic rules and campaign background sections and at least present the basics of the magic and religion rules. As it is, despite the high quality, you have to question the game's value for money.

"If you want a detailed fantasy RPG, *HârnMaster 2nd Edition* has a lot going for it... It is logically structured, and the well written rules make it easy to absorb."

VITAL INFO

title:	*HârnMaster 2nd Edition*
system:	a roleplaying game
price:	£21.99
publisher:	Columbia Games
	001 360 366 2228
released:	out now
e-mail:	questions@columbia-games.com
web site:	http://www.columbia-games.com/

And the players said...

Steve: "It looks lovely and the rules work, but it's a bit complex."

Jim: "An improvement over the first edition, but it's pricey"

Ben: "If you want something with an 'authentic' medieval feel, this is definitely it."

Looking elsewhere...

Fantasy remains the most popular genre for roleplaying, and so there are a lot of systems to choose from. Two of the best are TSR's *AD&D*, which is frighteningly well supported and familiar to most roleplayers, and FASA's *Earthdawn*, which has an innovative rules system and a unique setting of its own. Neither present quite the same depth or 'realism' as *HârnMaster 2nd Edition*, though, being aimed at a more 'heroic fantasy' style.

The Final Verdict

"A detailed fantasy system that's logically structured and well designed. Unfortunately, the presentation and high quality of the writing and design don't quite make up for the lack of rules for magic and religion. If you want to run a historically based 'low fantasy' campaign, though, it could be what you're looking for."

Andy Butcher

Score 6/10

Guildbook: Masquers

when you're dead, appearance is purely a matter of taste.

Wraiths have a lot to worry about. For a start they're dead, which is rarely a fun thing to be. And, on the whole, they tend to be short of a body. So what exactly are they made of now that their flesh has gone the way of, well, all flesh? Plasm is the somewhat less than predictable answer, a substance which is 70 percent soul, 20 percent belief and 10 percent game mechanic. And, to top it all, it's also considerably more malleable than flesh.

VITAL INFO

A sourcebook for
Wraith: The Oblivion
£7.99
White Wolf
001 404 292 1819
Out now
http://www.white-wolf.com

Masquers are those wraiths who have learnt the Arcanos Moliate, an interesting, if bizarre, ability which enables them to shape plasm as if it were clay. This *Guildbook* seeks to both explore the nominally banned Masquers Guild and to demonstrate the role Moliate plays in Shadowlands society.

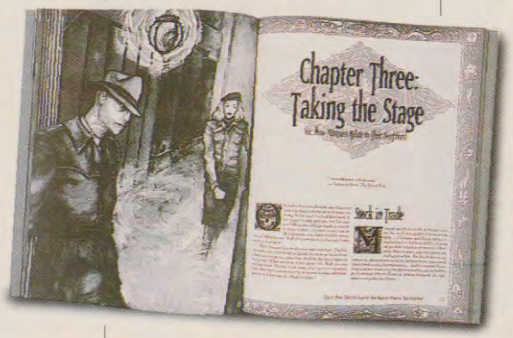
A big role it is, to be sure. A wraith who can change his appearance, or that of others, has great power. He can be an assassin or a beautician, a spy or an armourer. As such, masquers are much sought after, but little trusted. Not surprisingly, the fact that they can turn their compatriots into soft furnishings with consummate ease doesn't endear them to society at large.

The book kicks off with a short story, then gives the structure and history of the guild across two chapters. Next up are the guild's relationships with both its fellow wraiths and the multitude of other supernatural residents of the World of Darkness. The final two chapters are devoted to new uses of Moliate and to the regulation set of character templates.

The standard of art really is top notch, dark and disturbing, while powerfully illustrating the concepts being presented. The writing is equally good, crammed full of ideas, characters and a pleasantly warped sense of humour. Storytellers will find much they can plunder for any campaign in the books.

Problems? Well, there are a few to mention. *Masquers* attempts to do more than the size of the book actually allows. Many ideas are presented but not really developed, leaving you with the frustrating feeling that you are only glimpsing a small part of a much larger picture. Several terms are mentioned long before they are explained in the book, which is always annoying.

The metaplot that is running through the short story at the beginning of each book is also progressing at a rather awkward pace. Although *Guildbook: Sandmen* was published several months ago (**arcane** 5), the events in *Guildbook: Masquers* take place almost immediately afterwards. This makes the plot extremely difficult to use as a background to your own game.



While these shortfalls do take the edge off an otherwise excellent sourcebook, *Guildbook Masquers* does make significant inroads into developing wraith society, and the very different nature of post-mortem existence. As such, it's a valuable addition to any *Wraith* storyteller's library.

Adam Tinworth Score 7/10

Dragon Dice Battle Box

Dragon Dice Battle Box
An introductory set for
Dragon Dice
£9.99
TSR
01223 212517
Out now

The *Battle Box* has been specifically designed to attract and introduce new and younger players to the game of *Dragon Dice*. The box contains everything you need to start playing *Dragon Dice*, including a new set of introductory rules.

As a start-up set the *Battle Box* does what it is designed for very well. The confusion of dice is nullified by the careful and precise way the basic rules book has been written, and these step-by-step rules ensure that each player understands exactly what he or she is required to do to win. In addition, the components are all very well designed, and the whole package is well put together. The only problems are the random assortment of dice – a fixed selection would have made things more playable – and the fact that the full rules refer to a couple of things that aren't actually in the box, which can be annoying.

As far as it goes, then, the *Battle Box* achieves what it sets out to do – introduce players to *Dragon Dice* in a painless, enjoyable fashion. It won't be long before you have to buy more dice, but then it is designed as an introductory set.

In fact, the *Battle Box* is the introductory package that should have preceded all of the other *Dragon Dice* boxed sets. TSR has a habit of 'introducing' games long after they have been available on the open market. I'm sure there would now be many more *Dragon Dice* players if it had originally been available.

Chris Baylis Score 7/10

Nephilim Gamemaster's Companion

Some roleplaying games, it has to be said, are known to be considerably easier on the referee than others. Chaosium's *Nephilim*, while intriguing and potentially very rewarding, definitely falls into the 'hard work' category as far as refs are concerned. As such, this 96-page book comes as a welcome aid for anyone attempting to run a *Nephilim* campaign.

Nephilim Gamemaster's Companion
A supplement for
Nephilim
£9.95
Chaosium
001 510 547 7681
Out now

The book itself is split into a number of sections, each dealing with different aspects of the game. It begins with a complete history of time, from the start of the universe up until the present day. As well as making interesting reading in itself, the section helps to define some of the Nephilims' attitudes and perspectives.

Next comes a discussion of magical items, including both those that are created by *Nephilim* and other more powerful artefacts. This leads into the next chapter, which looks at elemental creatures, both from a roleplaying and a rules perspective, and which also includes several new creatures.

The most useful sections of the book, though, are the next two. The first is full of suggestions for designing and running *Nephilim* campaigns, complete with a number of interesting examples. This is perhaps the first time that Chaosium has actually discussed what *Nephilim* (in its eyes, at least) is actually all about as a game, and it makes for interesting reading.

This section is followed by an example campaign set in and around the San Francisco Bay area. Although there is not enough information here for someone who doesn't actually live there to run a campaign around the city, it undoubtedly provides a good example of many of the principles discussed in the previous section of the book.

In all, then, the *Nephilim Gamemaster's Companion* is a handy book for any struggling *Nephilim* referee, although you can't help thinking that some of this material would have been better off in the main rulebook.

Andy Butcher Score 7/10

Rifts World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign

Don't be misled by the title, the *Coalition War Campaign* isn't a campaign-length scenario. It's a 224-page *Rifts* supplement about the military might of the Coalition States and the ambitions of the States' leader, Emperor Prosek. The powerful, fascistic, humanocentric empire has always had an 'exterminate first, ask questions later' policy on mages, aliens and anyone who doesn't wholeheartedly agree with the States' ideology. And it is now ready to launch a major offensive against neighbouring territories.

If you want to know the intricate workings of the Coalition States' war machine, from types of forces and how they are deployed down to weaponry, hierarchy and medals then look no further. Some of this is adapted from previously published material but it is useful to have all that information in one place, and the supplement does detail enough new suits of power armour and mega-damage robots to give *Rifts* players the kind of grief they seem to enjoy.

However, if you want a lengthy adventure to take your campaign beyond the events of the Juicer Uprising – which this supplement ostensibly follows on from – you are going to have to do a lot of work yourself. There are just five pages of short adventure ideas which are usable and versatile – providing a good mixture of combat and moral dilemmas – but they aren't enough. A further chapter with at least one fully fleshed-out scenario would have increased the supplement's usefulness for any *Rifts* ref.

Lucya Szachnowski Score 5/10

Rifts World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign
A sourcebook for *Rifts*
£12.99
Palladium Books
001 313 946 2900
Out now

Knightmare Chess

One of those wonderfully simple ideas that seem so obvious in hindsight, *Knightmare Chess* is a set of cards designed to be used with chess. Each of the cards, when played, creates a special effect of some kind. The Fireball card, for example, is played immediately after a piece is moved without capturing an enemy piece, and causes the piece to explode, removing it from the game, together with any pieces in the adjacent eight squares (kings are not affected).

This English version of the game from Steve Jackson Games is based on the French original, *Tempête sur L'Echiquier* and consists of 80 beautifully illustrated cards, each of which has a points value. Before play the cards are split between the players, who then have 150 points to build a deck for the coming game.

You shuffle your deck and draw a hand of five cards, then play chess. On each of your turns you may, if you wish, play a card. Likewise, you may also play a card on your opponent's turn, provided the card allows you to do so. If you run out of cards, you have to continue to play as normal.

Knightmare Chess is an utterly bonkers game that's best played every now and then, as a change from *Magic*, roleplaying or whatever else you normally do. Sadly, in Britain at least, the set is somewhat pricey, but it is great fun to play.

Andy Butcher Score 7/10

Knightmare Chess
A card game expansion for chess
£12.95
Steve Jackson Games
001 512 447 7866
Out now

BloodFury

Did you have a nice day at the Fortress of Solitude, then?"

"Not really. A civilian got shot up while we were fighting the agents of that mysterious drug-pushing gangster, Mr Caesar. The poor girl needed a blood transfusion. And her blood group turned out to be incredibly rare."

"Was it AB rhesus negative?"

"No. Mutagenic! Her brother was the only person on Earth who was an exact match."

"A bit inconvenient."

"It's a plot device. They're pretty common in my line of work. We tracked him down at the top secret government research institute where he works, but he refused to come and help his sister."

"Heavens, why ever not!"

"Because he'd been replaced by an evil robot double! So we decided to track down the person who kidnapped the real McCoy."

"Was it something to do with his secret government research?"

"That's right. He was researching a virus that had broken out in a small town, turning the inhabitants into homicidal maniacs."

"So what did you do?"

"We walked around the empty streets, looking at dead bodies and getting attacked by paranoid survivors, of course. That's our job. And then we realised... the virus had been introduced deliberately."

"Deliberately?"

"Through contaminated pharmaceuticals! And guess who was planning to use the same drugs to send the whole population of Metropolis crazy."

"Not..."

"Yes! The mysterious Mr Caesar, who got us involved in this whole mess to begin with."

"That's a big coincidence." →

BloodFury
An adventure for *Champions*
£TBA
Atlas Games
001 612 638 0098
Out in November

Proteus

The clashes between runners and corps in *Netrunner* escalate into a full scale war.

When Wizards of the Coast released *Netrunner* earlier this year (**arcane** 6), it set itself a hard act to follow. Not only was it one of the most playable as well. Unlike so many CCGs, which need an expansion set to fix any problems in the original game, *Netrunner* played brilliantly straight out of the box. How was WOTC going to follow it?

The answer is *Proteus*, the first expansion set. Not only does the set complement the basic game perfectly, it also offers several completely new types of card, increasing the options open to both the Corp and the Runner.

The first of these are 'morphing' programs. *Proteus* offers both players a variety of cards that can alter their basic structure. The Corp now has ICE programs that can switch types – a Wall that can become a Sentry, for example – while the Runner has access to ICE Breakers that can switch targets – say, a Killer that can break Walls. These cards come in a variety of types, some of which can switch at any time, others where the decision must be made when the card is installed. Likewise, many of the new ICE cards have subroutines that are affected by the other ICE on the same fort, or can be altered when the card is encountered in a run. Others have variable strengths or can be moved or uninstalled during play.

The Runner also has another new type of card, the Hidden Resource. These are installed face down, introducing an element of uncertainty for the Corp. Most of the cards allow the same actions as the basic resources, such as making money or removing tags, but the Corp doesn't know what a Hidden Resource can do until the Runner decides to use it.

VITAL INFO
An expansion set for *Netrunner*
15-card booster pack
£2.20
Wizards of the Coast
0345 125599
Out now
uk@wizards.com
http://wotc.ukonline.co.uk/

The last major addition to the game is Bad Publicity, which gives the Runner a new means to defeat the Corp. There is a selection of cards for both Runner and Corp that give the Corp Bad Publicity counters. If the Corp gets seven counters, it loses the game as stockholders lose faith in the company and its share price falls.

There are also new 'standard' cards, including a variety of new Virus Programs for the Runner, as well as all the other basic card types. Most of these are variations on cards from the basic set, such as Corrosion, a 'quiet' version of Jackhammer, and so on.

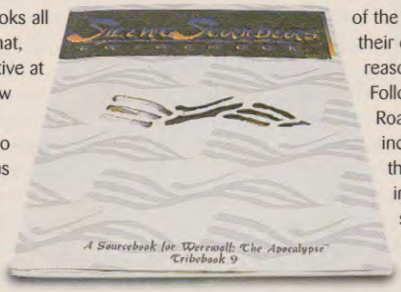
Proteus is a great example of what a CCG expansion set should be. It builds on the strengths of the basic game, offering new strategies for both players, as well as maintaining the balance of *Netrunner*. None of the new cards or rules are too powerful, and neither do they add too much complexity. They do give both sides more to think about, introducing more uncertainty, but that's a good thing. So, a superb expansion set for a superb game.

Andy Butcher Score 9/10

Silent Striders Tribebook

walk with the dead and dice with the devil.

The *Werewolf* tribebooks all follow the same format, which can be restrictive at times but means you know pretty much what you're getting for your money. So far there's been nothing as magnificent as the inspirational *Malkavian Clanbook* for *Vampire*, but nevertheless the standard has been consistently high and you can't go far wrong with them.

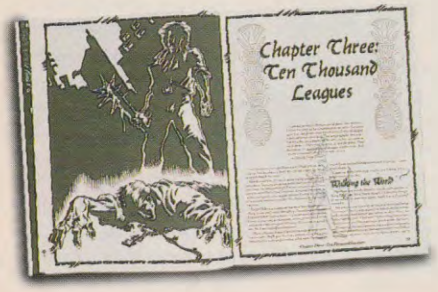


The Silent Striders have been one of the least defined tribes so far, but this sterling effort puts that right. The Striders are the nomads of the garou world, travelling many paths through this and other worlds, carrying messages and gathering secrets, solitary and taciturn, and often haunted by the ghosts of the dead.

Twilight Running is a short cartoon strip following a young Strider on an adventure through the spirit world. Dust is the history of the Striders, starting with their origins in Eygpt and the reason for their hatred of the Followers of Set. Shared Roads explains their culture, including their close ties with the gypsies and the importance to them of storytelling and secret languages. Ten Thousand Leagues outlines the places and people that Striders will meet on their travels, and what sort of reception to expect. The Appendices contain the game mechanics including new gifts and totems and character templates, as well as an inspired Tribal Weakness which should provide endless roleplaying opportunities.

VITAL INFO

A sourcebook for *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*
£5.99
White Wolf
001 404 292 1819
Out now
http://www.white-wolf.com



All this information is delivered as the education of a Strider pup, suitably on the move as he tries to keep up with his mentors – on the open road, around a gypsy fire and in the spirit world. The change of locale and cast keeps the narrative fresh and captures the freewheeling lifestyle of the Striders effectively.

The authors avoid the danger of pretension when dealing with haunted loners by highlighting other aspects of the Striders mentality, particularly their natural propensity for adventure and risk-taking. This sidesteps stereotypes and gives players a range of choices for their characters. If there is a failing it is that there's no advice given on managing Strider PCs in a campaign. How do you integrate a character whose entire rationale is to keep on the move and never to settle?

The style is informal and easy to read without being flippant, and a strong vein of dark humour is very welcome. This is a sound piece of work, clearly laid out, full of good ideas and dark moody artwork. It brings colour to one of the most elusive tribes, and after reading this I wanted to play one.

Mark Barter **Score 7/10**

→ "I'm a superhero, darling. I get used to them. What's for supper?"

Andrew Rilstone **Score 6/10**

GURPS Dinosaurs

Nasty, scaly and equipped with far too many teeth than is good for them, dinosaurs hold a particular fascination for many, and now the guys at SJG have introduced these (thankfully) extinct beasts into the *GURPS* gaming universe.

But *Jurassic Park* was never like this. From the pen of seasoned games writer Stephen Dedman, *GURPS Dinosaurs* is actually two books under one banner – the first 80-odd pages are a monster (ahem) bestiary listing over 100 different dinos and prehistoric creatures (including Doug McLure movie faves such as the Sabertooth Tiger, Giant Spider and Brontosaurus, plus the stars of *Jurassic Park*, Velociraptor and T-Rex).

GURPS Dinosaurs
A sourcebook for *GURPS*
£11.95
Steve Jackson Games
001 512 447 7866
Out now

Chapters are arranged in chronological order of geological ages and then sub-divided into the various types of beasties. The layout is clear and dotted with neat line drawings of the animals, and the text is concise, well-informed and occasionally wry – Dedman is quite happy to take pot-shots at *Jurassic Park* and that other most heinous of dinosaurs, Barney.

The second half of the book is a re-tooled and re-worked version of Kirk Tate's long out of print *GURPS Ice Age* sourcebook, with complete rules and material for generating and playing caveman PCs. What on the surface seems like a bit of a lame concept actually has some cool ideas, but I do have doubts about how a Cro-Magnon campaign would fare over a long period. Of course, there's plenty of scope for time travel and Lost World adventuring with this. Even *Flintstones*-style games are covered, but a ref would have to base a large part of the campaign in dino territory to do this book justice. My only gripe is the lack of any comic books listed in the biography. Titles such as *Age of Tyrants* would be of great use to anyone after background ideas.

Jim Swallow **Score 6/10**

Rolo's Guide to All Things Magical

There's a shift in *AD&D*, especially within the *Forgotten Realms* setting, towards players gaining independent knowledge about the campaign world. TSR has been releasing sourcebooks which are specifically aimed at players (though, of course, the ref should read them as well), such as the *Rolo's Guides* which we've seen appear over the last year or so.

Rolo's Guide to All Things Magical
A sourcebook for *AD&D*
£11.99
TSR
01223 212517
Out now

Rolo, for those of you who don't know of him, is a famous adventurer who, in an effort to help out other adventurers in Ferûn, has written a number of guides to regions within the Realms. He's one of those characters that everyone's heard about, and one that just about every Dungeon Master must have been tempted to introduce to their campaign at some point or another. Anyhow, Rolo's now branched out, trying his hand at compiling a guide to, well, All Things Magical.

The book, which stresses that its contents may not actually be true (that's up to the ref – you can't have the players thinking they know *everything* about magic in the Realms), contains 65 new spells, details of the people who know these spells, new magical items, magical locations throughout the area, a huge section on the crafting of magical items and some details of an entirely new form of magic. What's that called? Why, Spellfire of course, which just happens to be the name of a certain collectable card game by TSR. Spellfire is a complicated business, and I wouldn't actually encourage any DM to give it to a player to use; it's way too powerful for the majority of campaigns, and the very possession of it suggests close affiliation with Mystra, which most wizards would never aspire to.

There's a hell of a lot of information packed into these 128 pages. It would take weeks to assimilate it all, and months on end of gaming to incorporate it all into your campaign world. The fact that the ref can ignore it at will is important – you really don't want the players thinking they know too much, and, if I were to use it, I think I'd actually ban my players from reading it. Used as a ref's magical guide in its own right, *Rolo's Guide to All Things Magical* is an interesting and worthy addition to the lore of the Realms, with plenty going for it.

Paul Pettengale **Score 7/10**

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Ironwood

A 'mature' setting consisting of swordplay, spells and sex. Allegedly.

I have never read the comic on which this RPG is based. I do, however, have an excuse. *Ironwood* the comic contains a number of scenes in which the characters become involved in, er, physical relations – one 'hot' sex scene per issue plus an extra one if you buy the graphic novel, according to the advert in the back of this book. Her Majestie's Customs and Excise department therefore feel the need to protect me from it.

Not (despite promises on the cover) that there is much sex in this supplement, although the illustrations do include a relatively large number of boobies and a rather smaller number of willies. Instead, it is a fairly standard trawl through the fantasy world where the comic is set.

It's one of those jokey, eclectic fantasy settings where vampires bump into centaurs and giant snails; where your deity might drop in for supper and second year demonologists get lectures from genuine demons. It seems that Avalon, a disc-world with the eponymous Ironwood near its centre, is the True World, of which ours and the other five are only reflections. There is a certain amount of traffic between the worlds, via portals called Fairy Trogs. So, King Arthur ended up in Avalon during his last journey, as did some of his knights, who ended up settling there and founding the human kingdoms. There's even a place called New Seattle for the more recent ex-pats. Someone has decided to open a branch of McDonalds there.

VITAL INFO

A sourcebook for *Theatrix*
£17.95
Backstage Press
001 415 241 8889
Out now
bckstage@crl.com

There's an impressive amount of information here – the magic system alone could easily have been a supplement in its own right. But like many games-of-books, a lot of it is confusing if you don't already know the background pretty well. You get tantalising paragraphs about the Bell Wardens, Goblin Kings and Giant Snails without feeling you know enough about them to referee a game.

This isn't helped by the cryptic and occasionally impenetrable writing style the authors adopt. A 'simple' sub-plot (intended for use in character generation, to flesh out your character's background) is summarised as follows:

"Ickity, ackity, oop, ahh-ah. It's yours. That's it. Well well well. Small town kid makes good."

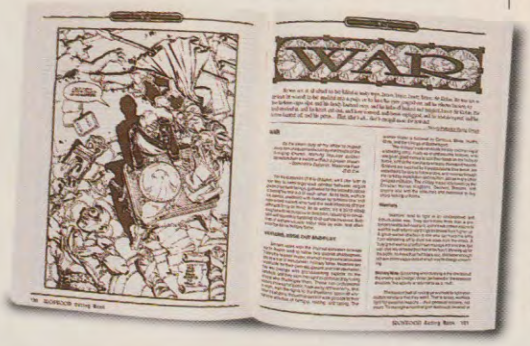
Hmm. Your guess is as good as mine!

There is also very little about how to run an Avalon-based campaign, and about what sort of adventures are appropriate for the setting. Given the emphasis the Theatrix core rules placed on plot structure, this is very surprising indeed.

If you're at all familiar with the comic, or if you are interested in fleshing out the skeleton of an off-the-wall fantasy setting for yourself, then this might be a good buy.

But whatever you do, don't buy it for the dirty pictures alone; there are cheaper and better sources of those…

Andy Butcher Score 6/10



A Guide to Transylvania

Transylvania has been synonymous with evil and superstition ever since Bram Stoker penned *Dracula*.

Now Stoker's vision of this feudal, blood-soaked land has been resurrected, fleshed out and given a horde of new skeletons to keep in its dusty cupboards.

Those not familiar with *Masque of the Red Death* may find the very concept of an *AD&D* game set in the 1890s a little hard to comprehend. Yet with surprisingly few tweaks and this correct setting the system works, and what's more makes for a rivetting change from more usual, slightly predictable Tolkienesque adventures. Naturally this campaign accessory centres on the *Dracula* myth, but while Vlad has been away at Carfax Abbey other forces, both good and evil, have begun to vie for power. And while the Red Death virtually formed this state for their own ends, now a series of rival cults and the soldiers of good are on the march.

A Guide to Transylvania
A sourcebook for *AD&D Masque of the Red Death*
£7.99
TSR
01223 212517
Out now

Written in a brisk manner, reminiscent of a Victorian Grand Tour, this guide gives referees a fascinating insight into the very heart of Transylvania mixing up history, legend, superstition and 1890s fact to create a world so believable you can almost smell the garlic.

Transylvania offers no example adventure, however if the Forbidden Lore and legends don't start you thinking then you're running the wrong game. The only weakness of *Transylvania* is that as a sub-set of *Ravenloft*, which in itself is a sub-set of more traditional *D&D*, then its useful appeal is limited. However, if ever proof was needed that *D&D* isn't just a game about Orc bashing, then this is definitely it.

Trenton Webb Score 9/10

Star Wars Classic Adventures Volume Three

This book reprints three previously published *Star Wars* scenarios, marginally re-jigging to bring them into line with the second edition rules.

Tatooine Manhunt centres around the mysterious Adar Tallon, a rebel hero long believed dead. Practically every Bounty Hunter in the universe seems to be after him, and the people who used to know him keep getting bumped off. The trail leads to various familiar locations – you get to have a brawl in the Mos Eisley Cantina, and get attacked by Sand People in the Jundland Wastes (as in "are not to be travelled lightly").

Riders of the Maelstrom begins with a really heavy-handed plot device dumping the PCs on a luxury star-cruiser. So they spend the scenario drinking cocktails and relaxing by the pool. No, actually, I'm lying – they find that the star-cruiser is the venue for a meeting between a pair of more than usually corrupt imperial Moffs, and therefore the target for an attack by pirates.

Death in the Undercity is set on the Mon Calarmari homeworld. A floating city producing ore absolutely vital to the survival of the rebellion (aren't they always) has been suffering from a series of mysterious 'accidents'. Let's just say that the scenario begins with PCs shuttle locked into a collision course with the city they are trying to rescue (pesky imperial saboteurs!) and ends with them framed for a double murder, evading a lynch mob while trying to reveal the real conspirator.

Chases, explosions, far-fetched locations, a fair smattering of double-crossing and intrigue. These scenarios recapture the flavour of the *Star Wars* movies well. They're very well explained, if a bit too contrived. Good value for any *Star Wars* referee.

Andrew Rilstone Score 7/10

Classic Adventures Volume Three
Collection of scenarios for *Star Wars RPG 2nd Edition*
£13.95
West End Games
001 717 253 6990
Out now

Night Stalkers

If powerful cards are what you want from a *Spellfire* expansion set, then *Night Stalkers* is definitely for you – these are mean, nasty and dangerous cards. With an abundance of darkness, such as the Vampire Realm, the Haunted Graveyard and the Black Death, and the introduction of Thieves and Thieves Skills, this new set is undoubtedly going to mean radical changes in *Spellfire* decks everywhere.

Night Stalkers
An expansion set for *Spellfire*
12-card booster pack
£1.99
TSR
01223 212517
Out now

For the creative player, the Thieves and their skills work very well in a deck aimed at controlling the opponent's hand size, because many of them have discard properties. In what seems a blatant attempt to provoke amusement and prevent more complaints about regurgitated artwork, it is rumoured that a selection of TSR staff (apparently a certain high ranker in the TSR Cambridge office is hiding under a most fetching wig on card 88 – Find Traps) dressed up complete with blue faces, green hands, extremely bad cases of acne, dismembered limbs, ham acting aplenty, and gathered for the photo-shoot. This proves conclusively that live-action roleplaying can be immensely enjoyable to those taking part, but

can look daft to the non-participant. Having said that, these photographs do a good job of showing that *Spellfire* is just a game that isn't meant to be taken too seriously.

Chris Baylis Score 8/10

Sages and Specialists

Just how many blacksmiths have appeared in your multitudinous *AD&D* campaign worlds? Dozens, I should imagine – every village seems to have one, every player seems to want to go and hunt one down, and every horse your player characters own is going to need one sooner or later. But what class defines a blacksmith in *AD&D* game terms? A fighter? Possibly, though realistically that shouldn't be the case. With this conundrum in mind, TSR has now released the book of *Sages and Specialists*, a reference book for referees detailing non-player character classes of all types, including blacksmiths.

This 128-page, softbound book covers 11 different 'commonly found peoples' which players in your group are likely to attempt to consult at some point during a typical campaign. Accompanying the trusty blacksmith are apothecaries, appraisers, cartographers, engineers, guides, healers, historians, scribes and seers. Even though these character types aren't supposed to be played as PCs, each one can be rolled up and has a set of skills and abilities which can be assigned during the creation process – just like the numerous PC types currently available for the *AD&D* system. And, like the current character classes, these specialist classes can advance in level, gaining new abilities as they increase in experience.

Sage and Specialists
A sourcebook for *AD&D*
£11.99
TSR
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While the idea behind *Sages and Specialists* is a sound one, and it's now useful to know exactly what tricks these character types can get up to (and at what skill level), it strikes me that the ref is rarely going to use this information – most of it is common sense, besides which, the precise abilities of a sage of three years' experience should be flexible; a whole scenario shouldn't be wrecked because a sage can't be privy to certain information at his current level. So, fine in theory, but in practice I have a few doubts about the usefulness of this addition to the *AD&D* rules set.

Paul Pettengale Score 6/10

On Hallowed Ground

oh my god! and your god. and yours. and yours...

God does exist. It says so in *On Hallowed Ground*, a new *Planescape* tome which proceeds to lay bare the dark on every deity in the multiverse, detailing their powers, potential, phone number and e-mail address. In essence *Planescape* is the unifying setting for all the 'official' *AD&D* worlds, and these established settings sit alongside *Planescape's* own unique planes. Together they supply the variety and extremes that make travelling the multiverse so exciting. The downside about this catch-all position is that the system is honour bound to obey all the other systems' dictates, rules and various foibles.

This doesn't pose a problem on a basic level because each plane is a totally contained, self-sufficient system and play obeys the 'local' rules. Gods, however, make for some major problems because the influence of these big boys extends beyond their home plane.

Hallowed Ground's solution is to supply functional details of the various pantheons and their patches, to serve as a source and setting for *Planescape* adventures. These descriptions are then supported by a theological system that's palatable and logical enough to tackle the thorny problem of the simultaneous existence of several supreme beings. The godly descriptions combine excellent information and characterful portraits. Dealt with on a pantheon by pantheon basis, the attitudes and aims of all significant powers – demi, lesser, intermediate and greater – are explained with clear brevity. It doesn't get weighed down trying to explain hit dice, spell lists or special attacks because there's no need. These guys are Gods and no character, no matter how hard, is going to fight them and win. The interaction that will happen will take the form of omens, via proxies, or if players are very lucky conversations with the big man himself. And there's information aplenty for that kind of tomfoolery. The theology of *Hallowed Ground* is progressive, clearly explaining just how priests gain spells and the benefits to be had from planar proximity to a 'chosen one'. The suggested optional rules, though, don't do enough to balance the priest's loss of levels, suffered for straying far from his God's home, to make clerics an enjoyable class to play in a *Planescape* setting.

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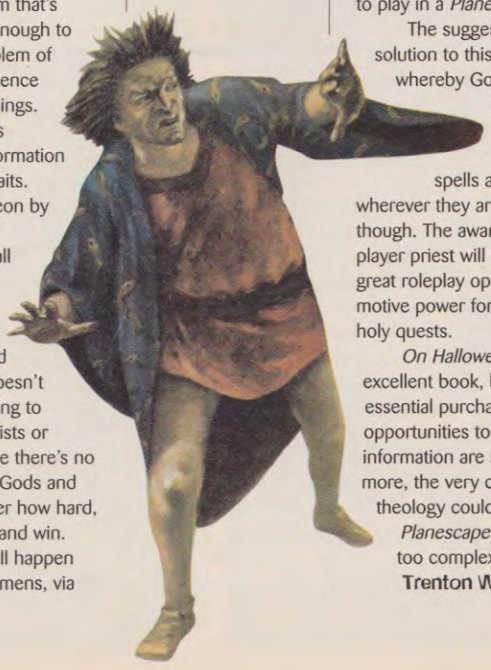

The suggested Power Key solution to this problem, whereby Gods can give priests artefacts that allow them to cast their spells at full power wherever they are, is intriguing though. The award of one to any player priest will not only supply great roleplay opportunity, but motive power for all manner of holy quests.

On Hallowed Ground is an excellent book, but far from an essential purchase because the opportunities to use its information are so rare. What's more, the very clarity of its theology could make the lives of *Planescape* player priests far too complex to be any fun.

Trenton Webb Score 6/10

Heavy Gear Duellist's Handbook

The *Heavy Gear* gaming universe was first introduced by Dream Pod 9 in its premier two-player card game *Heavy Gear Fighter. HGF* pitched two *Heavy Gear* mecha against each other in a fight to the death battle, or 'duel' – part of the rules' background explained that on the planet Terra Nova, where the game is set, arranged fights and gladiatorial duels were a commonplace way of settling any disputes that arose.

Heavy Gear Duellist's Handbook
A sourcebook for *Heavy Gear*
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Now, with the *Heavy Gear* RPG firmly established in the minds of roleplayers, this latest supplement harks back to the card game and fills in the background on the characters, cultures and politics of Terra Nova's duelling communities.

Each kind of duellist is profiled, from the haughty, honour-obsessed military fighters to the money-hungry sports star types. There's plenty of source material for campaigns, with data on NPCs, locations and the welcome addition of more maps. A junk-pile city state in the Badlands is fully described, complete with adventure seeds and yet more NPCs. A handful of the best duellists and their Gears are profiled, and as usual with *Heavy Gear* books, a few new mecha designs and weapons types tailored for duelling are included – vicious delights such as morning stars, spike cannons, chainsaws, whips and lances all come into play in this latest offering.

Because of the small-scale focus of duel gameplay, extra rules are provided to run *Gear* fights on a 'skirmish' scale. While these pages appeared in a similar form in the *Life on Terra Nova* supplement, their re-printing here is a sensible move, and unlike some other game companies, Dream Pod 9 doesn't try to force you into buying *Heavy Gear Fighter*. This is certainly a good place to begin a *Heavy Gear* game.

Jim Swallow Score 6/10

Terris

explore a whole new world in one of the best multi-user computer games ever.

Multi-User Dungeons, or MUDs, have been around for as long as the Internet. In our feature about Internet gaming ('Fire on the Line', **arcane** 10 – see page 53 if you missed it) we looked at the background and history of these games. *Terris,* available on the America On-Line service, is one of the few commercial MUDs that's not only worth paying for, but an excellent game in its own right.

VITAL INFO

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Terris is set in a detailed fantasy world, full of places to explore, adventures to complete and, of course, monsters to kill. The game is played from a text interface similar to that used in early computer adventure games – to move around you simply enter direction commands such as NORTH (or N), to pick something up you type GET and so on.

There are several things that make *Terris* stand out from other MUDs. The first is the emphasis placed on roleplaying and social interaction. The game has been actively designed to encourage co-operation between players. For a start, characters cannot kill each other. More subtly, though, all the different classes have their own strengths and weaknesses, so a mixed group will be able to deal with things that will kill a single character, regardless of skill or level. Likewise, many of the quests in the game can only be completed by groups of characters who are working together.

Finally, there is the unique concept of roleplaying points. Each time you go up in level, you gain a number of roleplaying points equal to your new level, which you can award to other players for good roleplaying. When you go up a level, the number of roleplaying points you've been awarded increases the benefits you gain. All of which means that the game not only encourages co-operation between players, but makes for good roleplaying as well.

The success or failure of any MUD is largely down to the players themselves – the way they act and deal with each other creates much of the game's all-important atmosphere. Perhaps encouraged by the co-operative slant, this is another area in which *Terris* excels. The regular players are among the most friendly, helpful people on any MUD, always happy to offer aid and advice to newcomers on any aspect of the game, which is always a definite bonus if you're not entirely sure what you're supposed to be doing.

Lastly, the world itself is huge and detailed, with a great deal of depth. Regardless of how long you play, there's always something new to discover, whether it's the answer to a quest that's been puzzling you for ages, or a whole new region of the world to explore. Combined with the complex interaction of the players, guilds and gods of the game, this gives a real sense of a living, breathing fantasy world.

Imagine playing your favourite fantasy roleplaying game with 50 or more people at the same time, all with their individual goals and ambitions, and you'll have some idea of what *Terris* has to offer.

Andy Butcher Score 8/10

Eye of Doom

Eye of Doom
A scenario for *AD&D*
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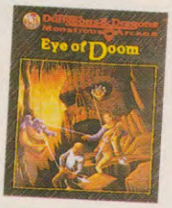
A couple of months ago the *Monstrous Arcana* series for *AD&D* kicked off with the rather good *I, Tyrant* book, detailing everything you could ever want to know about Beholders. Unfortunately, *Eye of Pain,* the first in a three-part series of 32-page adventures involving a hive of beholders and their less than wholesome kin, was less than impressive (**arcane** 10).



Regrettably, the second part in the series, *Eye of Doom,* is no better. Picking up the plot with the characters finding their way to the small village of Cumbert (which sits slap-bang on top of the underground complex which houses the beholder hive), they are quickly ambushed by members of the Unblinking Eye, which is a secret society of humans in the village who are dedicated to serving the interests of the beholders beneath them.

For some bizarre reason, in order to progress further through the scenario, the players have got to infiltrate the Unblinking Eye – a feat which would seem somewhat improbable given that members of the group know who they are (having recently ambushed them and all). This section of the adventure (which forms the bulk of it, it's that short) seems like a contrived attempt at getting the players involved in some roleplaying instead of hacking their way to glory. But, regrettably (again), it doesn't really come off.

The Feral
An expansion pack for *Dragon Dice*
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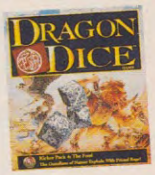
Another problem with it is the way in which the adventure ends. Of course, I'm not going to divulge what happens here – that would spoil it for everybody – suffice to say that unless you intend to run the final scenario in the series, you're going to be immensely disappointed with the conclusion. It leaves the whole plot hanging, which is bad enough, but what's worse is that it would be very difficult for the DM to fix it so that the players can do anything else before having to progress further into this plot. The party is left, in effect, in a position from where there is no conceivable way back until they've taken on that final horror – a horror which isn't encountered until the next installment is available.

So, another one to avoid, I'm afraid. I would show a little optimism and say let's hope the final part is better, but I'm not at all convinced that it will be, and besides, it will be pretty hard to play unless the party has ploughed its way through the previous two scenarios. And I wouldn't wish that on anybody. Unfortunately, this series, thus far, has been a waste of a great foe – the beholder is a unique monster in *AD&D,* and one that deserves far, far better than this.

Paul Pettengale Score 3/10

The Feral



TSR has, since the Amazons, kept each Kicker Pack of entirely one race, and this has proved to be the most popular and acceptable marketing strategy for all concerned. *The Firewalkers* and *Undead Kickers* have already added a great deal in the manner of strategies and tactics to the *Dragon Dice* game, and the fourth Kicker, *The Feral,* is now available and set to continue in the same vein.

The Feral are the ultimate Blue-Gold creatures, being 'of nature' and 'as one' with the Air and the Earth. They are defined as strong and speedy animal-folk with somewhat limited magical abilities. Only the Wolverine Shaman are truly capable of any real worthwhile spellcasting. The monsters, Elephant, Rhino, Bear, Owl and Lion rely more on trample or clawing, as do most of the regular one and two-point troop dice. Each of the rare three-point dice have specialised icons – most of which have been seen before – with a few actions specific only to the Feral, such as Trumpet. Able to use any of the magical spells of the Flatland terrain, the Feral also have several other interesting spells which are unique to them alone.

I believe that the Feral are better suited to complementing a spellcasting army by giving it increased speed and strength, than for creating a complete force of their own kind. However, you can certainly have an amusing three-race army by mixing Feral, Undead and Firewalkers together. They aren't particularly successful against well-planned armies in small (50 point and lower) battles, but nevertheless, they are extremely enjoyable to use in larger army combats.

Chris Baylis Score 8/10

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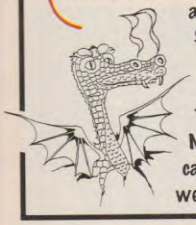

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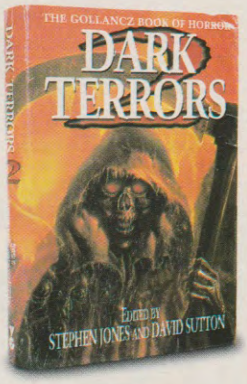
Dark Terrors: The Gollancz Book of Horror

Stephen Jones, the co-editor of this anthology and also editor of *Best New Horror* (reviewed on the right), has won a lot of praise for his work. But as he himself would probably admit, there is so much talent in the horror field at the moment that it would be hard indeed to fill an anthology with anything but excellent stories. Certainly most of the works in this collection would have no trouble finding their way into another deserving home.

One quite brilliant story in *Dark Terrors 2* – Peter Straub's *Hunger* – shows, if nothing else, that critics who turn their nose up at horror (and there are fewer of these nowadays) are fooling no-one but themselves. Many of these stories – and some of those in *Best New Horror* – display a blurring of boundaries, which is both welcome and exhilarating, and which should earn their authors more mainstream credit.

Paul J McAuley's sharply satirical *Negative Equity* is difficult to categorize, as is Clive Barker's fantasy *Animal Life* and Graham Masterton's *Underbed.* The only thing that can be said about all of these is that they are all uniquely good. The great Ramsey Campbell's unnerving *Out of the Woods,* and a surprising departure from Jay Russell *(Celestial Dogs,* **arcane** 4), also help bring this anthology up to a high standard.



edited by
Stephen Jones
and **David Sutton**

Published by
Victor Gollancz

Hardback £16.99

Out now

"Both its arms were raised, so that its sleeves had dropped back, exposing not hands but hooked black claws."

from *Underbed* by Graham Masterton

Because of its largely psychological nature, *Dark Terrors 2* may not prove that useful for referees, and being a hardback, it is also considerably more expensive than *Best New Horror,* but it still comes highly recommended. And you might just be able to wangle both these anthologies for free through **arcane**, by entering our competition on page 82.

Gideon Kibblewhite

Score 8/10

Witchcraft

Magic as religion in Medieval and Victorian England. Paganism surviving into the present day through subterfuge and disguise – an entertainingly romantic and atmospheric setting for a tale of revenge with the Law of Karma as its catalyst.

"The old ways had long flourished in England. The ways of witch and wicker man."

But it's a shame that *Witchcraft* sets itself up for ridicule by claiming to be 'philosophically profound', because the variation of artists complements well the changes in scene and mood. But, philosophically, it's more Bruce Willis than Wittgenstein. The theory of karmatic law isn't 'profound'. It may be true, but it's not profound. And, somehow, as if to support my increasing belief that *Witchcraft* is decidedly average, I noted that they have steel blades in 1342 – now that's magic.

Sociologists talk of the 'secularisation' of modern society – Christianity, or whatever, yielding to science. Yet we hear little of the re-emergence of religions and beliefs that predate Christianity's predominance in this country, except in graphic novels. You may feel you need resources like these for your games, but there are better examples than *Witchcraft.*

by **James Robinson**

Published by
DC Comics

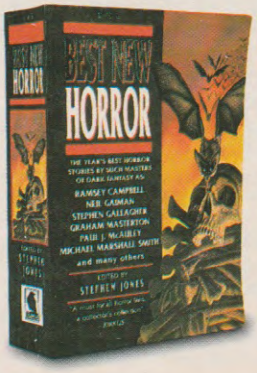
Graphic Novel £10.99

Out now

Jonathan Palmer **Score 5/10**

Best New Horror

Modern, classy, and edited with a sense of variety that makes sure it never slips into the rut of familiarity, this is a superior selection of the outstanding short horror writing of last year. Several entries deserve specific praise. Michael Marshall Smith delivers a funny, acutely observed and ultimately horrific tale of depravity on the Internet. And the excellent Paul J McAuley tells a stylish and witty postmodern *Dr Mureaux's Island* type of tale, the hanging ending leaving you begging for more.



"Ransom cocked his head; a moment later a gong sounded distantly. 'Dinner I believe.'"

Not here, not now, an evolving hit-and-run paranoia story by Stephen Gallagher, deserves a mention too, as does the ambitious and strange twist in the vampire story by Brian Stableford. Then there's *Loop* by Douglas E Winter, a fascinating study of obsession taken to its logical and somewhat macabre conclusion, and R McLeod's eerie *Tirkiluk,*

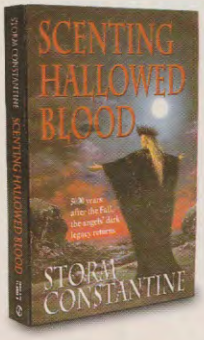
edited by
Stephen Jones
Published by
Raven
Paperback £6.99
Out now

which is a story of isolation and cold, and life and death, set in the Arctic.

I could go on. These and all the other stories included in the collection are marked with a poise and a quality of writing which makes this annual anthology a valuable addition to any library, and not just a horror fan's. The amazing array of genres, eras, characters, themes and situations also make it a book no self-respecting referee should be without.

Gideon Kibblewhite **Score 8/10**

Scenting Hallowed Blood



by **Storm Constantine**
Published by
Signet
Paperback original £5.99
Out now

The second book of Constantine's Grigori Trilogy, *Scenting Hallowed Blood* continues the story of the fallen angel Shemyaza. The Grigori are an ancient and powerful race, living hidden among us while they strive towards their goal of world domination. Only Shemyaza, a rogue Grigori, has the power to stand against them.

Scenting Hallowed Blood takes place in and around High Crag in Cornwall, a bleak and desolate area that hides all manner of dark secrets. As the new millennium approaches, the Grigori are attempting to harness the power of the site to their own ends.

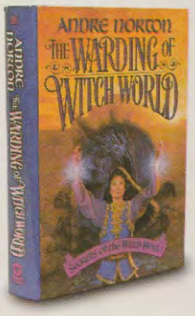
"Like Cain, Shemyaza haunted the desert. For many days he staggered brokenly through day and night, burned by the sun, scalded by the ice of midnight."

Having escaped the devastation he caused in the small village of Little Moor in the first book of the series, *Stalking Tender Prey*, Shemyaza continues to walk the Earth. He finds himself drawn to High Crag, where only he and his companions, the twins Owen and Lily Winter, and Daniel, a mystic, can foil the Grigori's carefully laid plans.

Although little over half as long as *Stalking Tender Prey*, *Scenting Hallowed Blood* is nonetheless a worthy sequel. In many ways it's a tighter, more focused work – freed from the need to explain so much of the background of the Grigori, Constantine concentrates more on the story and characterisation. This does mean that you really need to have read *Stalking Tender Prey* in order to understand what's going on. But that's hardly a chore – even at over 600 pages, it's a damn fine book itself, and now you've got the perfect reason to buy yourself a copy.

Andy Butcher **Score 8/10**

The Warding of Witch World



by **Andre Norton**
Published by
Warner
Hardback £16.99
Out now

Over the 60 years that Andre Norton has been writing fantasy, she has developed a style that makes reading her weighty novels a lot quicker and easier than it initially looks. First published in 1963, the *Witchworld* series is as old as me and I remember coming across it as a boy. It wasn't too difficult for me to read then, and it's not too easy for me now. But although this is the final installment, I feel no great sense of loss that it's over – the series, commendable though it is, has never been particularly special to me.

However, and importantly for **arcane,** it has been cited as a major influence on Richard Garfield in the conception and development of *Magic: The Gathering*. This I can believe – *Witch World* is full of magical special effects. However, although magic is everywhere, it feels natural. Though creatures from all genres appear, they mingle effortlessly. And it's all built up so professionally that leaps of faith become small steps.

There is originality in the treatment of stock fantasy motifs (no-one can accuse Norton of jumping on the fantasy bandwagon), but the style follows the time-proven formula of short, simple sentences with straightforward grammar. This, in part, is what has made these books sell so well and has added to their popularity with children, but Andre Norton also portrays women in a positive light, creating believable females, rather than just pretty, fluffy things for the menfolk to rescue in heroic style. The girls get fully stuck in whenever there's trouble about, and it is often they who are the most inventive and courageous in the face of adversity. However, despite this positive aspect, something else sticks in the craw.

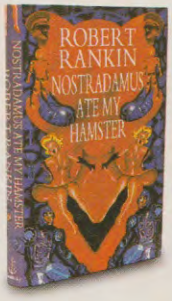
For, along with the usual association of Cold with Evil, there is the other metaphor of Dark as Evil and Light as Good. I don't know where this idea originates from, but when it is extended to Black as Evil and White as Good, the author, I'm afraid, is merely reinforcing insidious racist messages.

***"Evil-moves,* she sent. *Black land.* She swung out her arm toward the west in a vigorous gesture and her expression was one of fear mixed with loathing."**

I certainly don't think this unfortunate metaphor is intended, it's all extremely understated and follows accepted, though fundamentally wrong, premises. In fact, it wouldn't surprise me one iota if it had never crossed Andre Norton's mind that what she was saying could actually be construed as racist. It certainly never crossed mine until I came to read her again 25 years later. Maybe, it's never crossed yours, either. It's just a shame, though, that Andre Norton, like almost everybody else you'll ever meet in this life, has forgotten that Jesus was a black man.

Jonathan Palmer **Score 6/10**

Nostradamus Ate My Hamster



by **Robert Rankin**
Published by
Doubleday
Hardback £15.99
Out now

Surreality is something that I usually only ever encounter late on a Friday night, after a protracted period of winding down from a busy week putting **arcane** together. Robert Rankin, on the other hand, undoubtedly encounters strings of extremely strange events on a daily basis, because this is the only way he could possibly come up with the kind of mental splatterboard that is *Nostradamus Ate My Hamster*.

The plot is a little tricky to describe, but it goes something like this: Hitler, in his effort to cheat death at the end of the war, has flown forward in time in a Flügelrad (a flying saucer-shaped craft developed by the Germans in the closing stages of WWII), to a point where the Germans have taken over the world. They managed this by creating a film containing subliminal messages, which featured the hypnotic voice of an alien God which is working with the Nazis. And from there it starts to get strange.

"This man is clearly drunk," said Russell. "Come, Morgan, we will drink elsewhere. Good night to you, landlord."

The hero of the piece, Russell Nice, is working in a prop shop where the film is being made. He discovers, in an extremely roundabout way, what is going on, and sets about foiling Hitler's minions in their efforts to change history. At which point I'll stop because otherwise I'll spoil it for you.

Is it any good? Why yes. The humour, which is incredibly sick and intensely English at the same time, lollops from improbable situation to extraordinary plot device, stabbing you repeatedly with the fierceness of a stun baton. True, it's not until the end that you can really appreciate the devilishness of the author's mind (though you get some very strong hints on the way), but the journey through the monstrous mass of garbage that is Rankin's psyche is far more enjoyable than reading through anything Pratchet or Adams has ever written. Quite superb.

Paul Pettengale

Score 9/10

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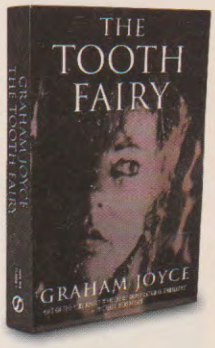


by **Graham Joyce**
Published by
Signet
Paperback £5.99
Out now

It is unusual for **arcane** to review a book in the month after its publication, but in the case of Graham Joyce's *Tooth Fairy* we'll make an exception. Why? Because this is the best book I've read this year. By some way.

I've got a biased perspective, though. You see, I'm 30-something, male and English. If you are too, you'll see a lot of yourself here in this diary of the rites of adolescent passage. And, if you're a girl, then here is a book that will tell you *exactly* what little boys are made of.

"The police had made no progress in identifying the corpse unearthed in the woods."

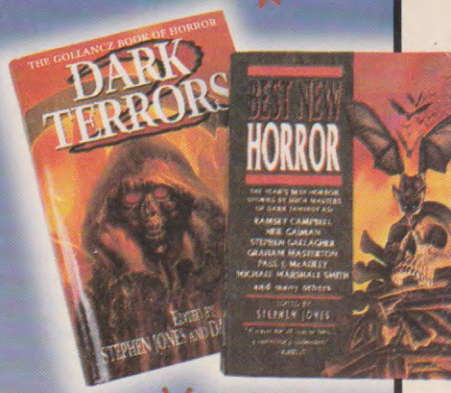
However, the principle interest in this novel from a roleplayer's perspective is the main character, The Tooth Fairy. Frightening, capricious, spiteful, erotic, compassionate, lonely and afraid – this is a most convincing and original characterisation.

And while any referee who could do justice to such an extraordinary creature as an NPC magical familiar would be special indeed, many of you would find inspiration here. But, leaving roleplaying aside for a minute, if you come from where I come from, you *must* read this book. Buy it today. I implore you. The evocation of youth is unparalleled – within the first hour, I was eight years old again, hanging around, fishing and playing football with Sam, Clive, Terry and, in later years, with Alice. It was a beautiful experience and it reminded me why I do this job.

Jonathan Palmer **Score 10/10**

Great Library Giveaway

Shock! Horror!



The finest horror anthologies of the year could be yours, if you are among the first ten people to satisfy our taxing quizmaster. Tell us the name of another collection edited by Stephen Jones and we'll enter you in the draw to win a copy of both *Best New Horror* and *Dark Terrors 2*.

1. Anyone associated with Gollancz, Robinson and Future Publishing who dares enter this competition will be invited to spend the weekend at a remote mansion owned by a mysterious recluse.
2. To enter the mansion of this competition once is easy. It's entering twice that's hard.
3. The editor is that mysterious recluse of whom we spoke; his powers are great and certainly extend to competition judging.
4. First come, first served.

12

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arcane scribblings

Have your say, write to the **arcane** *letters pages! And watch as the editor gives you stick.*

Dear arcane,

I recently returned from EuroGenCon (which was great as always), and one thing that struck me was the lack of female roleplayers there. Well, there were a few, but it most certainly wasn't a particularly healthy proportion.

This is somewhat disturbing, after all, there is no physical or mental reason why women shouldn't be interested in roleplaying. With this in mind I attended Harold Johnson's seminar on the future of roleplaying, eager to discover what his opinions on the matter were.

Sure enough, the issue arose, and what was the first slant offered from someone in the audience? "In my opinion, women don't use their imagination. They prefer more down to earth activities to roleplaying." Yes, someone actually said that. Fortunately there was a general murmur of disapproval over this comment, but it laid bare that there is a bias against women getting involved in our hobby.

Perhaps the guy's mother gave him a hard time or something, but I certainly don't think that his opinion is unique. We should encourage more women to roleplay by playing games which appeal to their less violent nature – it was interesting to note that at the White Wolf *Storyteller* system demos, the male/female split was about 50/50.

Jon Urch, Epson

We met a number of women at EuroGenCon who seemed to think that the industry was more welcoming to them than ever before. And there was definitely a higher proportion of female roleplayers at EuroGenCon than at the GenCon show in the States. It's a shame that a certain faction of male roleplayers seem to think that the hobby is essentially a 'male thing'. All the rest of us can do is encourage women to come along to our games and try to make them feel welcome.

Dear arcane,

It's vital that when you get a new person to give roleplaying a go, you don't scare them off straight away. I've put together a list of DOs and DON'Ts which I think we could all learn by...

1. DON'T use complex jargon – it's confusing and makes the game sound completely tedious.
2. DON'T use every single rule in the book – use selective rulings and make the rest up so that the session runs at a decent pace. This prevents boredom setting in for the players.
3. DON'T allow beginning characters to play spell casters. Rules for spell casting are usually complex – it's better to have a new participant play a barbarian type until he or she has got an understanding of the basic system.
4. DO ignore rules if they spoil the fun of the game. Fun is the priority here, after all.

Duncan Bates, Croydon

All sounds like good, solid advice, though it's common sense really, isn't it? Indeed, most of these rules go for roleplaying in general (use rules selectively, try to avoid consulting rulebooks during play etc). Not too sure about preventing a new player from playing a magic user though – what if the player really wants to do so? Are you going to say no, they can't, and thus ruin their fun?

Dear arcane,

I've been wondering exactly which games Lynne Wilson and Mia Hart-Allison have been playing. I looked through several of my rulebooks and found women in all manners of dress and in varying occupations. I admit, the only *AD&D* book I own is the original *Deities and Demigods;* I don't know how TSR now represents women, but I think in general the gaming companies are doing a fine job in the way they represent women.

Antony J Gallela, e-mail

Quickly grabbing a few books from the shelves behind me... Hmm, a fair mix there, though it does seem to be the case that the traditional fantasy rulebooks are the worst culprits, mentioning no names. The White Wolf rulebooks, on the other hand, are extremely good at representing women as intelligent, fully-clothed human beings. Which has to be good.

Dear arcane,

Could you suggest to your readers that they include their e-mail addresses with their letters, and that you print them whenever possible? It would make it much easier for gamers all over the world to communicate.

Antony J Gallela, bckstage@crl.com

It's a good idea, but not everyone wants to have an address printed (for fear of flaming, among other reasons). However, we're willing to print e-mail addresses, but only in instances where whoever sends the e-mail specifically states that they want the address printed. Can't say fairer than that, now can we?

Dear arcane,

I am writing for several reasons. First and foremost to congratulate you on by far and away the best roleplaying magazine to have appeared since the pre-100 issues of *White Dwarf.* Well done *(gee, thanks – Ed).* When the first issue of **arcane** came out I was working in a comic shop and the magazine was very popular. Since then my gaming pals all agree that it's got better and better.

You manage to cover all aspects of the gaming industry, but I implore you, please, don't cover TSR products. Now, I know that my opinions differ from other people's but you review too much *AD&D* stuff, which is a waste of space.

Duncan Bates, Croydon

I see a pattern emerging here – the same people, writing lots of letters in a month to try to catch me out. Well, it worked. But, let me address your point Duncan. **arcane** *attempts to review everything that's been released into the roleplaying and card game markets in any given month. TSR is a prolific company, and it produces a lot of supplements and scenarios for* AD&D, *which we simply have to cover. Remember,* AD&D *is still the most popular RPG system (in terms of what's played the most), and so the majority of* **arcane**'s *readership is going to be interested in those reviews.*

Dear arcane,

However much I enjoyed reading the 'How to Break the Rules' feature in **arcane** 11, I was disappointed that the piece failed to reach a conclusion that advocated dispensing with the dice, character sheet and rules altogether, in favour of playing yourself in a gaming situation. Friends, together with myself, have often opted for this approach when we've come together for an evening's play and somehow one of our members has failed to turn up for the regular game.

I can understand that people who are big fans of charts, complex rules and lots of dice-rolling would find the idea of playing without all of these things completely abhorrent, but for those of us

communication

If you'd like to get in touch with **arcane** *there are several ways. The most traditional is to send us a letter clearly marked '***arcane** *scribblings' and addressed to* **arcane**, *30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. The slightly more technically advanced among you can send us a fax on (01225) 732252, while all you fully-fledged InfoCyberOtakuNauts out there can e-mail us at:*

arcane@futurenet.co.uk *or visit our Web site at:*

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Top 50 referees?

Letter Of The MONTH

Dear arcane,

I've been filling in your form for my favourite ten RPGs of all time, and I got to thinking – just what is it that makes a good roleplaying game? Surely it's the referee, and nothing more. If a rules system is fast, accurate and easy to run, then that's great. If the background is inspirational, detailed and fun, then that too is good news. But all this is absolutely useless if the referee who runs the game is completely inept at creating a decent atmosphere and getting all of the players involved. With this in mind, I had some problems filling in your form. I had to judge how well I enjoyed a game based on how well the referee ran the game, rather than the game itself (which is why I've placed *AD&D* at the top, even though I don't think much of the system).

What do you think? Will your top 50 games be an accurate representation of how gamers really view the games they play, or will it be more a case of stating which referees are the best?

Martin Keel, Bristol

I see your point, but I still think that a good game rests as much on the quality of the system and the background as the referee who's running the sessions.

with a sense of adventure and a fertile imagination, it can be an immensely rewarding way to roleplay.

Creating a character which is essentially yourself is great fun – you get to write down your various skills and disadvantages, adding points for years of experience in one thing or another. And then the real fun begins – whether it's *Independence Day*-style alien invasion or the recent imposition of a police state, setting games in your local area is next to impossible to beat as a roleplaying experience. Give it a go.

P Illidge, Crawley

I've heard of this sort of thing a number of times, and all the gamers that I know who've tried it now swear by it as a great way to fill an evening. I, personally, don't fancy it – I prefer to play a character that is as different from myself as possible; it's the escapist thing – I play games to remove myself from everyday life, rather than to immerse myself in it further.

Dear arcane,

I have to agree with Christopher Manias (**arcane** Scribblings, issue 11) about Andrew Rilstone. In that same issue, Andrew wrote a completely pointless column asking roleplayers to stop playing interesting characters and instead adopt the persona of a stockbroker or something equally tedious. Get rid of him straight away!

Richard Crooke, Merthyr Tydfil

You're quite serious, aren't you? As indeed is this next chap...

Dear arcane,

I get the feeling that dear old Andrew Rilstone writes his column to provoke reader response. He asks the question: "Are our everyday lives really that uninspiring?" Well, the obvious answer to that one is yes. I've run many a game and not once has anyone suggested that we play a session about four people sat around watching the TV, or about going down the pub because you're all bored and there's nothing better to do, or, it being Sunday, about mowing the lawn. The whole idea of roleplaying is to play an interesting role – to escape reality. I want to be a gun-toting hero that gets the girl and saves the universe; I want to be a knight who's on a quest for the Holy Grail; and I want to be that FBI agent on the trail of terrifying aliens.

What I most certainly do not want to do is play Joe Soap who collects the garbage or delivers the milk. I can't imagine that it would be much fun to play a game where the climax involves Mrs Hottle from Number 34 telling you that she wants an extra pint today, and you haven't got one spare. No way.

Danny Bourne, e-mail

Old Andrew really is in for a knocking this month...

Dear arcane,

I've just read the the most inspiring article called 'Starships and Stockbrokers' in **arcane** 11. Hey! What a brilliant idea: let's all play ordinary people doing ordinary things. Perhaps Andrew Rilstone would fancy having a go at the fabulous game *Trees and Termites* where each player gets to play the plant of their choice, providing they don't roll a 20 and get turned into wood pulp.

Stop me if I'm wrong, but isn't roleplaying supposed to be fun? Yes, let's play ordinary people, but at least place them in extraordinary situations or the game's going to be pretty bloody boring!

Jeff Chadwick, Chester

I don't think Andrew thought he would provoke quite as huge a number of comments about his 'Starships and Stockbrokers' column as he's →

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T3 TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY TODAY

arcane shorts

And we're not talking underpants, but snippets from the month's letters that got left out...

All types of discrimination should be addressed by a referee; understanding race, gender or sexual politics is certainly no less important than understanding the rules of the game and the way the gameworld works.

Gareth Martin

Gareth is referring, of course, to the on-going debate about sexism in RPGs.

There are some lovely people out there, judging by your letters pages. Why not have an **arcane** Scribblings Christmas party and invite them all along. Weapons should be optional.

Brady Clarke

It would be a bloodbath.

Reviews should be no more than a mechanism for informing people what's available to buy. What do you care what other people think?

Colin Sinclair

I strongly disagree - reviews should offer a value judgement based on masses of experience, so that our readers don't waste their money on shite.

When will you start covering play-by-email games as well as play-by-mail?

Sarah Austen

We have no plans as yet, though if there's enough of you out there, we will. Let us know if it's something you want to see in **arcane**...

What are you guys doing for Christmas? My parents are away skiing and I thought I could come and stay with you over the holiday for some serious gaming. What do you say? Write soon!

Harmon Preston

Are you serious? I really don't think my wife would be too keen on me skipping our Christmas break to play yet more games - she has enough of me doing that every week. So no, sorry, but you can't.

← *managed. But again, I have to agree – playing dull people in dull situations is going to be, well, dull. But I don't actually think that Andrew was advocating that, merely that we ought to think about who we're playing sometimes and maybe look towards the mundane as an alternative to the norm, which is superhero types of whatever genre we happen to enjoy.*

Dear arcane,

Can you please help me? My single greatest ambition is to work in roleplaying game design, yet I have no real idea about how one should go about breaking into this type of career. I have spent enough time developing my own games to know that not only is it something I love, but that it's something I love enough to want to do professionally.

Stuart Swift, Worcester

This really isn't an easy one to answer Stuart, simply because there is no single reply. I was speaking to Steve Faragher (the previous editor of **arcane**) *about this very subject last night, and we both agreed that the easiest way to get into game design is to do it yourself (as indeed you have done), but to go a stage further and actually publish and market your product yourself. And that's not an easy thing to do – you need money, you need a lot of time, and a hell of a lot of luck to succeed.*

Alternatively, you can send games that you've designed to the various game publishers and hope that they can spot talent when they see it. Only problem with that is that most of them are in the States. In issue 16 I intend to run a feature on getting a job in the roleplaying industry, as penned by some people who've managed to do just that. Stay tuned...

Dear arcane,

While I am aware of the need to crop letters printed in your magazine in order to fit in as many responses as possible, I feel your reply to my letter which appeared in **arcane** 12 deliberately misled you readership, for as I made clear in my letter I am not and never have been a member of MENSA.

Of course, ignoring the facts enabled you to have a swipe at both myself, and, by association, the MENSA group as a whole. Still, journalistic ethics mustn't get in the way of your obvious need to write snappy put-downs whenever someone writes a letter you don't agree with.

Mark Byng

Okay, point taken, perhaps my reply to your last letter was a tad, er, flippant. But we never meant to denigrate the MENSA organisation or its Mensan members. Were having a bit of fun, no more, as we do with other organisations and individuals. We'll also happily poke fun at ourselves, and have done so often. No offense was meant, and given that we've had no complaints from MENSA members or officials, I can only assume none was taken. Strange then that a non-Mensan should feel so strongly about it. (And no, before you ask, that wasn't meant as a put-down.)

Dear arcane,

I do not believe you did a Retro' on *Dragon Warriors!* I didn't think anyone else knew that it even existed, and now that you've given it coverage everyone will want to get hold of a copy and we won't be able to complete our set. You see, we bought the first book and were unable to find the other two (we didn't know there were six in the set until your review). I would love to get hold of a copy of the complete set (including the first one – our copy is a little battered now). Can anyone help us?

David Coote, 7 School Chase, Halstead, C09 1BP

Shame, because I managed to lose my set in between moves several years ago – you could have had those for free. Perhaps someone else will oblige.

Dear arcane,

It should be written in letters big that I have had yet another X-traordinary X-perience. Only this time it's got nothing to do with my guitar strings...

My subscription copy of **arcane** 12 has not yet materialised, despite it having been available in the shops for several days now. This means that either:
A) Menzies' MIB (Men In Black) have stolen it in order to make me have to buy one of them from said store.
B) My postman has been altered by cyber-highlords of the hyper domain that X-ists outside human X-perience, causing him to travel at .75 times the speed of light, distorting time in accordance with Einstein's theory of special relativity. Or...
C) Someone at Future screwed up.
I'm betting on C.

David Dolliver, Pitlochry

It's those darn hyperlords, I say. Always screwing things up, they are. But seriously, we make every effort to ensure that subscribers' copies of the mag get to them before it goes on sale proper, but occasionally this simply isn't possible. If it doesn't turn up at all then phone our subscriber's hotline to check out what the problem is. The number is ☎ 01225 822511.

Dear arcane,

I must object in the strongest possible terms to Mr Brian Gillatt's YHTCIH system of wall-building. First of all, it is not systemless, contrary to what we have come to expect from **arcane**. Secondly, it neglects to take into account what must surely be the most vital ability when it comes to building walls: Constitution. (At least Mr Gillatt spared us the ignominy of using Charisma in his new rule!) Finally, Mr Gillatt's DM is letting him get away with far too much if he has given him a +4 chisel when he is only 15th level.

Sam Kington, e-mail

Oh I don't know, I let Jon's gnomish spy in my AD&D campaign have a pointy-stick +3 and he's only 2nd level. Keeps on having people's eyes out with it, the sick little man.

Dear arcane,

I'm glad to know that Paul Lugton enjoyed my 'Old New Age' article, but sorry to hear that he thought I'd missed something important – such as the reason why technology evolves as it does.

The reason for this omission is, of course, partly that it wasn't terribly relevant to the purpose of my article, but also because I don't believe that the answer is as simple as Paul believes. I'm not really in touch with current thought among professional historians on this, but last I heard, there was no great agreement, and certainly no easy answer. Paul reckons that the reasons are always social – that Rome didn't have an industrial revolution because it had slaves, who were cheaper. But the reason could have as much to do with poorer Roman metallurgy, or the lack of the 'scientific method', or the absence of a stock market system. And if slaves have an economic advantage over technology, why weren't the southern US states the manufacturing power house of the 19th century? I think that it's more likely that the Industrial Revolution killed off slavery, not that slavery would have killed off steam.

This is an important question, and some people think that they have easy answers. (If you want to get detailed, Paul could probably get a few Marxists and others to agree with him – although others in the Marxist school would tell him that there's more involved.) But, with no offense to **arcane**, I surely wasn't going to reel out any simple explanations in a short article in a games magazine.

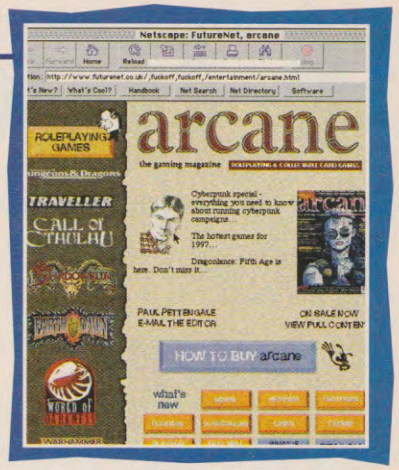
Phil Masters, e-mail

No offense taken, Phil. And thanks for making your situation clear. But there's to be no 15,000 word essays in my magazine! Not ever.

arcane On-Line

every serious gamer should be plugged into the net, above all so you can read our web site at http://www.futurenet.co.uk/entertainment/arcane.html

Think of a game, any game. It could be your favourite system, the game you were playing last night, the game you've recently been writing scenarios for, whatever. Now imagine that someone is willing to give you as much free material for that game as you could ever hope to read, or, at least, enough to beef out what you've already got so that you can run a good number of sessions with the minimal amount of work. Well, that kind of support is out there, and if you've got Internet access you can get hold of it for next to nothing. With this in mind, this month on the arcane Internet page we're going to take you to five sites which relate to five different games where you can get information and even source material by simply clicking a mouse... Oh, and next month we'll bring you five more.



Log onto the **arcane** Web site for reviews, news and other cool stuff.

FIVE WEB SITES YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO IGNORE

AD&D

What's it called?

Surge's Archive

Where is it?

http://www.omnigroup.com/People/surge/gaming/

And what's it like?

If you want plenty of gaming material for *AD&D* and *D&D*, then this is the place to come. There's more stuff here than you could ever use, and much of it is high quality. There are scenarios, character sheets, campaign ideas, rules suggestions, and a plethora of other files. This is an FTP site, rather than an actual World Wide Web page, so it's a pain to use (short code names are used for files instead of proper, full-length names). Also, as well as *AD&D*, there's support material for just about every other game going. This is a must visit for every gamer.

Call of Cthulhu

What's it called?

De Web Mysteriis

And what's it like?

As much as anything, this site is a launch pad to other *Call of Cthulhu* and Lovecraftian related sites, with little actual information to access directly from here. However, the list of sites to be found from this base is impressive – from fiction based on the *Cthulhu* mythos, through scenario and campaign info for *CoC* to listings of events and conventions for Lovecraft fans, you can find it all here.

http://www.io.com/~girthlin/cthulhu.html

Star Wars

What's it called?

Jason Ruspini's *Star Wars* page

And what's it like?

Another gem of a Web site this one, with a myriad of files for use with the *Star Wars* RPG. Of particular interest is the *Star Wars* FAQ which goes through rules queries together with general information about the game, and the seven adventures which are currently available for download. You can also find reviews of the latest *Star Wars* sourcebooks, technical information for hardware in the game, scenario and campaign ideas, background information, suitable characters for most games, and heaps of other stuff besides. Make no mistake, *Star Wars* referees should be winging their way to this Web site immediately!

http://stwing.resnet.upenn.edu:8001/starwars/rpg/

Vampire: The Masquerade

What's it called?

Ptitboul's *Vampire* Server

And what's it like?

Huge, in a word, with bags of top material for *Vampire* referees and players alike. There's a hell of a lot of fiction in here which is well worth checking out, together with scenarios which have been written for the game, and campaign background information for those of you who can't be bothered or haven't got the time to write up your own. Also, there's material here for referees and players of the other World of Darkness games, so whether you're into *Werewolf*, *Mage*, *Changeling* or *Vampire*, there's something to be found here for you.

http://www.eleves.ens.fr:8080/home/granboul/Vampire/

Be warned, however, this site can get very busy, so it's best to log on to it only at obscure hours, or when you can be sure that America is still in the land of Nod.

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay

What's it called?

The *Warhammer* Archive

And what's it like?

This has got to be one of the very best roleplaying Web pages on the whole of the Internet, with a super-slick interface (you click on a suitably-titled book – these include Scenarios, Magick, Careers, NPCs, Religion and other such topics which pretty well cover ever single element of the *Warhammer* world and rules system). The amount of info to be gleaned from each of these virtual books is quite staggering, and the info is added to on an almost weekly basis, which means each time you pop in for a look there's more for you to crib.

http://home.sn.no/~tomasf/WFRP/WArch.html

Again, this site can get busy, and its graphical nature means that it can be slow if you're using an old modem, so only log on during off-peak hours if possible. Other than that, this is a superb roleplaying resource, and you'd be mad not to check it out.

WRITE TO US

Do you run a roleplaying Web site? If you do, we'd love to know. We'll quite happily take a look at it and include its address on this page, together with a link from **arcane** On-Line. Send details to: arcane@futurenet.co.uk

HAVE YOUR SAY

If you have Internet access, then it's worth taking a peek at the uk.games.roleplay newsgroup. This is where people from all over the country discuss topics related to roleplaying in the UK, from the future of the roleplaying hobby to the contents of **arcane**!

free reader ads

The situation in Sector 999, where lies the shipwreck of the USS Bozeman, is looking pretty hairy. Far too many trigger-happy tiros with spaceships...

games for sale

● *Fiend Folio* – £25, *A1-A4* – £25, *S1-S4* – £30 + other stuff. Contact Jon on 01536 517909. Will swap for GW stuff

● *AD&D: Birthright* (+4 supps), *Spelljammer*, plus *ST:TNG* (2,000+ cards). Dave McLoughlin, 57 Ninth Avenue, Grantham, Lincs NG31 9TF

● Deluxe *RuneQuest*. Also *Glorantha* and *Monster Coliseum* – £35 the lot. Call James on 01642 570303

● *AD&D, Spelljammer, Immortals, Hollow World, Mystara*. Send SSAE for list to DM Whitfield, 13 Winchester Rd, Portsmouth, Hants PO2 7PS

● Good condition *Cthulhu* stuff for sale – *Aftermath: Equipment Guide* wanted. Phone Baz, evenings, 01380 728791

Baz comments: "There's been a sudden surge of interest in Aftermath *in the last few weeks. Could this be part of a precognitive warning? Not so much playing games as... advance training?" We doubt it, Baz.*

● Clearout of unwanted RPG books, etc. *AD&D, CoC, Twilight*, etc. SAE to 154 Hydethorpe Road, Balham, London SW12 0JD

● *Judge Dredd* RPG (GW) + annuals 1978-94, collection comics, magazines. Offers to Brian 0181 402 2113

● Out of print RPGs – 1976 onwards. TSR, *MERP, Judge Dredd, Cthulhu* etc. Pete 01237 475866

● *RQ II – Pavis, Big Rubble, Griffin Mountain. C&S, 1st ed Pendragon, Shadowrun, 1st ed AD&D, WH. White Bear, Red Moon, Nomad Gods.* Wargames – *Art of Siege, Blue and Gray Quad, SPQR* etc, etc. Contact Danny on 0114 281 8353 or you can e-mail pagangod@dial.pipex.com

● RPG sale – over 200 items. SAE to Paul Clarke, 20 Parkview, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2HF

● **Bargain of the Month**
Shadowrun RPG plus 16 supplements, various titles. 1st to 3rd edition. Job lot – won't split. £50. Contact D Reardon on 01293 412234

● *World at War*. The game of politics and warfare in the early 20th century. Robbie 01463 225942

cards for sale

● Grab bag! 350+ *METW* limited edition cards including 15 rares. Only £15. Paul J Davy, 27 Haversham Close, Gosforth, Newcastle/Tyne NE7 7LR

● *Guardians* CCG collection, reasonable size, all expansions, good price. Call Adam 01676 533119, evening

● *Magic* cards – sell and trade. For more details write to Wayne Jordan, 21 Long-Lands Rd, Nottingham Beeston Rylands NG9 1LR

● *Magic:TG, Middle-earth* full sets and singles for sale. Phone 01295 267262

● *M:TG* card sets for sale from *Fallen Empires* to *Alliances*. Contact 01733 753227 evenings, or e-mail jaelithe@zetnet.co.uk

● *Mythos* single cards or complete adventures for sale. All cards available. Send SAE for list to Steven Clapton, 8 Kesteven Rd, Stamford, Lincs PE9 1SQ

● *ST:TNG, Star Wars* and *ME:TW/Dragons*. Lots of cards, all cheap. Contact Phil, 79 Lewsey Rd, Luton LU4 0EN

● *V:TES, Vampire, A. Hearts, Dark Sovereigns, The Sabbat*. Will buy/sell or swap. Paul 0191 2401811, phone/fax

● *Star Wars* black border Han Solo card, mint. £15. Call Jeremy 01225 448983 after 6pm

"£15? We could almost buy our own ship for that!"
"But who's going to fly it, kid, you?"
"You bet I could. You know, I'm not such a bad pilot myself!"

wanted

● *Empire Strikes Back, Return of the Jedi* chromium subset cards. Few standard cards. Lee 0113 271 3532

● *M:TG* Int. Collectors set. Offer £40-£50 (maybe more). Also cards predating *FE* 01247 28613. Ask for Gareth

● Old GW *Realm of Chaos* books. Good condition please. Good price paid. Call Ian on 01382 534921

● *Space Master: Aliens & Artefacts SMCII. Shadow World: Curse of Kabis, Fethenna*. Also *Cyberspace*. Call Thomas on 01508 492076

● *Block Mania* player with *Blocker's Manual* I can borrow. Ed, 145a Ladywell Rd, Lewisham SE13 7HZ

● *Lands of Doom* campaign set for *Marvel Universe* RPG, original or copy accepted. Contact Guy 0181 286 4652

● Can anybody help? I'm looking for a game that was in a roleplaying mag ages ago. It was about campers coming across a group of 'weresheep'. If I remember correctly, it was based on a 3-stat system. A.Read@coventry.ac.uk

Weresheep? You're having a laugh, mate.

clubs

● Barnsley Trading Card Club meets every Tuesday, 6pm, Pitt St Methodist Church, Barnsley. New players always welcome 01226 785024

● Manticore Games Club! Cards, boardgames, RPGs! We play anything! Every Thursday, Old Bell, Hemel Hempstead – 7.30pm. 01442 216777

● East Midlands RPGA/Harlequins Gaming Club. Sundays 1.45-6ish at 2nd Arnold (St Marys) Scout HQ, Atherley House, Calverton Rd, Arnold, Nottingham. Simon Stoppard 0115 921 5533, John Harris 0115 939 4185 or sara@theleys.demon.co.uk

● Redcar Adventurers RPG club every Friday, 6 till 9, Redcar Library. Contact John 01287 642523

● Wandsworth RPG – Mon 7.30pm. 57a Heathfield Road, Wands. For information – Dave 0171 738 1807

● The Albion Guard Games Club, Mon/Tue evenings, The Plough, Dog's Head St, Ipswich. RPGs, CCGs, wargames, boardgames. Contact Keith on 01473 289560

● The Orc's Armpit. *Magic, Trek*. RPGs, *Earthdawn, Warhammer*. Hobson's Choice, Banbury. Second Wednesday every month

● West London card games, *Magic, Star Wars*, etc. Tuesdays, the Castle, Acton. Call John 0171 772 1957 daytime or 0181 993 4439 evening

● Glasgow University Gaming Society meets Thursdays, 5pm, Queen Margaret Union, University Gardens. Term time only. Non-students welcome

Welcome back Glasgow.

● Guild of Melée and Magic – London's biggest club – 1st visit free, annual membership £5
Central – Jason 0181 715 8675
South – Jon 0181 699 9654
West – Gerald 0181 991 1297
East – Douglas 0181 553 5332

● Leicester LW&FG meets for wargaming, roleplaying, CCGs, etc, every Tuesday from 7.30-10.30pm at the Westend Neighbourhood Centre

● Roleplayers of Chester, Wednesdays 7.30pm-late, Chester Rail Club, Hoole, Chester. Greg on 01606 883698 or Allison on 0151 200 6945

● Black Country RPS. Thu 7.30pm. Blackheath Coronation Social Club, Park St, Rowley Regis, W Mids. All ages and games. 70p a night. Call Steve Turner on 01384 235244

The BCRPS has relocated due to expansion. Good work, Steve.

● Pembrokeshire Gaming Club – Wednesday nights, 6-9pm, Community Education Centre, Haverfordwest. *Magic, AD&D, Vampire, Necromunda*. Call Adam 01437 762633

● Rugby Players Guild. Monday nights 7.30-11pm. Players and GMs 18+ welcome. Call Bill 01788 334165 or Keary 01788 334941

We've passed this on to our colleagues on Rugby *magazine. Aren't we kind?*

● Speak fish man! East Kilbride Games Club needs you, so don't be bored! Call John 01355 260601

contacts

● *AD&D 2nd ed* players wanted (age 14-16 – prefer 5 lvl exp) to start club. DMs also welcome. Please reply. Call Michael on 01423 711581

● Inexperienced tiefling seeks fellow *AD&D Planescape* worshippers aged 15 to 16. Females, males and others welcome. Dave 0151 639 4030

● Two beginners want to join/form club in St Albans. Margaret, 1 Creighton Ave, St Albans, Herts AL1 2LF

● 24 year-old ref/player seeks RPG players 18+ *(AD&D?)*. Any system welcome. Paul, 21 Canterbury Rd, Farnborough, Hants. 01252 377208

● 24 year-old seeks gamers in Yeovil. Anything played. Contact Andy Dowland, 35 Penn Hill, Yeovil BA20 9SF

● New blood required for established group. Most games played. Falkirk, Alloa and Stirling areas. Contact Richard Talbot on 01259 214305

● *M:TG* and *Heresy* player seeks others in Portsmouth area. Where are you guys?

Come on Pompey! Show a leg!

● *M:TG* addict needs people in Cambridge to play with. Write to Ian Baker, 31 Lisle Ln, Ely, Cambs CB7 4AS

● Exp. roleplayer looking for players in N London. Play most systems. David 0181 341 9883 after 7.30pm

● Mr Johnson requires *Shadowrunners* for urgent work in Dartford area. For further information contact Cutter on 0410 415103. 16+

● West Yorkshire CCG and RPG contacts wanted. Write to Iain, Howroyd Lane, Whitley, Lower Dewsbury WF12 0NB
● *Warhammer 40K* player (21), relocated to West Ealing. Seeks players/club. Tel Richard 0181 579 9161
● 16 or under DM wanted for novice players in the Christchurch area. Call 01425 621807 after 6pm
● Experienced roleplayer seeks group in Falmouth area. Term time only (October-December). Matthew 01326 311162
● Inexperienced gamer wishes to join RPG club in Bangor/Belfast area, Northern Ireland. Conor 01232 421990
● *Mutant Chronicles* players wanted in Cornwall. Is anybody out there? Ryan 01872 560607 (Truro) after 6pm
● *Netrunner* players required in the Bracknell area. Sean, 59 Wylam, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8XS or smcclean@epSchool.demon.co.uk
● Players and DM needed for science fiction *D&D*-style game. 16+. In Coleshill/Coventry areas. Call James on 01675 481664
● Players (age 20+) needed for Bognor/Chichester area group. Various RPGs, experience unimportant. Balligan 01243 266170
● Two female roleplayers (18+) needed to balance the genders in Newcastle club. Insanity is compulsory. Contact David 0191 266 2906
● Players required for T. T. wargames, GW + others (20+) in Eastwood Nottingham areas. Phone Steve on 01773 763453

live action

● Experienced live roleplayer wants to get in contact with LARP groups around the London area. Gary 0181 749 2688
● Beyond Belief LARP in Manchester area. On-going campaign. Call Darren 0161 286 0642. Beginners welcome and wanted
● 'Alternate realities'. Edinburgh-based LARP group. Interested? Contact Andrew on 0131 440 1873 or e-mail ahar@srv1.med.ed.ac.uk
● Attention *Gathering* fans! The Legion is recruiting. New members welcome. Interested? Contact Lord Ordos (Pete) 0181 428 8820 or 838 1163
● Bradford's infamous Vampire Society seeks new blood – you can e-mail splegg@comp.brad.ac.uk for details of our roleplaying system
● Midgard LRP meets every Sunday in Bishops Stortford area. Contact Jason on 01279 659127 for details please

fanzines and PBM

● 'On The Grey Carpet…' Read the next 4,997 words or so only in *Espylacopa 3*. £1.50. Gorgeous. Wes White, Splott's Moor Farm, Wick, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8JS
● *Roll Your Own* issue 7 + archives. Vampire and Cyberpunk. 75p+p&p. Cheques payable to Mark Brassington, 61 Lord Nelson St, Sneinton, Nottingham NG2 4AJ
● New PBM – *Global Aerial Dominion*. Send SAE to Dave, 9 King's Avenue, Marcham, Abingdon OX13 6QA
● *Anarchy* Fanzine/PBM. Playtesters needed for free first-go PBMs. It's free, what's to lose? Write to: Craig Boyes, 6 Hill Top Way, Braithwaite, Keighley, W Yorks BD22 6HP
● Free science fiction and fantasy magazine. Can be accessed on the Internet at http://www.sf-fantasy.com Visit us now!
● *GAD* (PBM). Apocalyptic war using military aircraft! Send SSAE to: Dave, 9 King's Avenue, Marcham, Abingdon OX13 6QA
● *Warpstone* issue 3. The *WFRP* fanzine. £2.50, (£9 for 4 issues). John Foody, 10 Colenso Rd, Clapton, London E5
It's a good little 'zine. Bit pricey, mind.

miniatures

Our new section for the little fellas.
● Citadel dwarf army – unpainted. Send SSAE to Dan Tomlinson, 6 School Lane, Roby Mill, Wigan, Lancs
● Wanted – unpainted fantasy miniatures for RPG. Not Citadel. Cash paid. Steve, 31 Riverview, Sturry, Canterbury CT2 0PA
● 25mm painted elven army. 80+ infantry, 40+ cavalry – £250 ono. Contact Ghost 01207 236487
● Painted plastic goblin archers x15 – £28 only. Good amateur standard painting service. SAE to Darryl, 12 Kent Avenue, Ross, Herefordshire
● For sale. Loads and loads of Citadel figures. Franco Guarasci 01509 236410

messages

● Liz!! Ditch the ghoul. I love you. Mike is dead. It's only a game, you know… BJ
● Ashtray (spam, spam, spam. Consider yourself harrowed). Toast rack on the edge of oblivion
● Brenk, I have to run a *World of Darkness* game. Can you provide some werewolf info? Fergus 01935 77581
● Lost jumper! M&S baggy, dark grey. Mislaid after *Star Wars* tournament at EuroGenCon. Was probably too inebriated to notice!
● Must find missing 'Echo' FBI squad – e-mail the Thomas Cullen Fortran Detective Agency on ReynoldsH@cardiff.ac.uk
● Fire consumes thy earthly shell and Bloodwolfe is released to the clan of Eagle and Hawk

---

It's a kind of open-ended, free-form PBM Epic Space Opera. It's the continuing saga of the USS Bozeman...
● "Space Pirates – Big trouble, hard lads! Freeship Profit can save your ass. Cash only." Captain No'face
● To Captain K'Vor – IKC Qu'jagh. "Your help is welcome but leave the pirates for me to deal with." Captain O'Connor – USS Hero
● USS Hero from Gunboat Rona – this sector is a non-combat zone. Desist your attack or be disabled
● USS Defiant to Gunboat Rona – 16 quantum torpedoes locked on. Desist or be destroyed
● "The renegade reveals itself! Prepare to die K'Vor!!" Imperial Legate Melnibon – Warcruiser CEV Hunter
A warp core breach caused the USS Bozeman to start losing power back in **arcane** *9. This attracted space pirates like vultures – but the USS Hero and the IKC Qu'jagh answered the distress call of the beleaguered vessel. Then came Loony Loopy Leppy with his super kill-o-bang missiles and several mates – and now Captain No'face's mercenaries are on the scene as well...*

Unnecessary crew have now abandoned the Bozeman, as the stand-off in sector 999 reaches crisis level. And, as if the situation wasn't tense enough already, Imperial Legate Melnibon of the CEV Hunter has just revealed himself for the treacherous dog that he is!

An almighty battle now seems imminent – inevitable, even. But who's going to fire first? And at whom? And who's going to take defensive measures and put up their shields before it all kicks off? Eh?

other stuff

● 50+ *Shadowrun* books for sale. £250 the lot. Contact Brian 0141 558 6166 for more details
● Free – FRPG on the Web at http://www.geocities.com/Area51/3002/
● For sale – original Dave Carson artwork from *Chaosium, Palladium* etc. Send SAE for price list. Linda Krawecke, 1a Mountney Rd, Eastbourne, E Sussex BN21 1RJ
● For sale – *Star Trek* videos: *Voyager* 2.1-2.10 and *DS9* 4.1-4.10. £130 ono. Immaculate condition. Contact Mark on 01422 249922
● CD32 with 14 games, lots of Amiga games, 1970 World Cup album, 70s-style Brazil shirt. Lee 0113 271 3532
● **arcane** issue 1, early *White Dwarfs*, some *AD&D* wanted. Reasonable prices paid. Contact Peter after 7.30pm on 01705 632467
● Wanted – good condition issue 1 for a reasonable price (ie. not extortionate). Martin 0161 281 1418
● **arcane** issues 1-11 for sale in VGC. Offers to Steve on 01706 356135
● For sale – **arcane** issues 1-12. Offers for the lot only. Mark 01422 249922
Ho hum, that's it for this month. Another year, another dollar.

Please place my free ad under the following heading

- ☐ Games for sale
- ☐ Cards for sale
- ☐ Wanted
- ☐ Clubs
- ☐ Contacts
- ☐ Live action
- ☐ Fanzines and PBM
- ☐ Miniatures
- ☐ Messages
- ☐ Other stuff

arcane reader ads are open to individuals and non-profit making organisations only.

Terms and conditions
- All ads are accepted in good faith.
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Gnome World PART 6
WRITERS: DAN ABNETT AND ANDY LANNING
ARTIST: ANDREW CURRIE
FINAL REPORT OF BO'SUN SPUNKY "THE JABBERWOCKY, A RAVENING PREDATOR FROM ANOTHER GENRE, HAS SLAIN ALL THE CREW OF THE DWARF MINING LONGSHIP NOSTRILHOLE EXCEPT ME..."
"...SO I HAVE SET THE NOSTRILHOLE'S STEAM TURBINES TO OVERLOAD, GRABBED THE SHIP'S DRAGONETTE SMAUG, AND TAKEN TO THE LIFEBOAT..."
ANY SECOND NOW... SHIELD YOUR EYES, SMAUGY!
K-THOOM!!!
WELL, LITTLE MATE, WE'VE GOT A FAIR OLD VOYAGE AHEAD OF US. BETTER SET SAIL AND-
GRRRRR!
GET AWAY! GET AWAY!
EXPECTING THE WORST, I SQUEEZED THE LITTLE DRAGONETTE TIGHT AND SAID MY PRAYERS..."
"TOO TIGHT, MAYBE..."
BURP!
SMAUGY?
OH NO! NOOO!
"WITH LUCK I SHOULD REACH THE COAST OF WEEK GNOMEDIA IN ABOUT A MONTH THIS IS BO'SUN SPUNKY. SIGNING OFF."

DICEMASTER™

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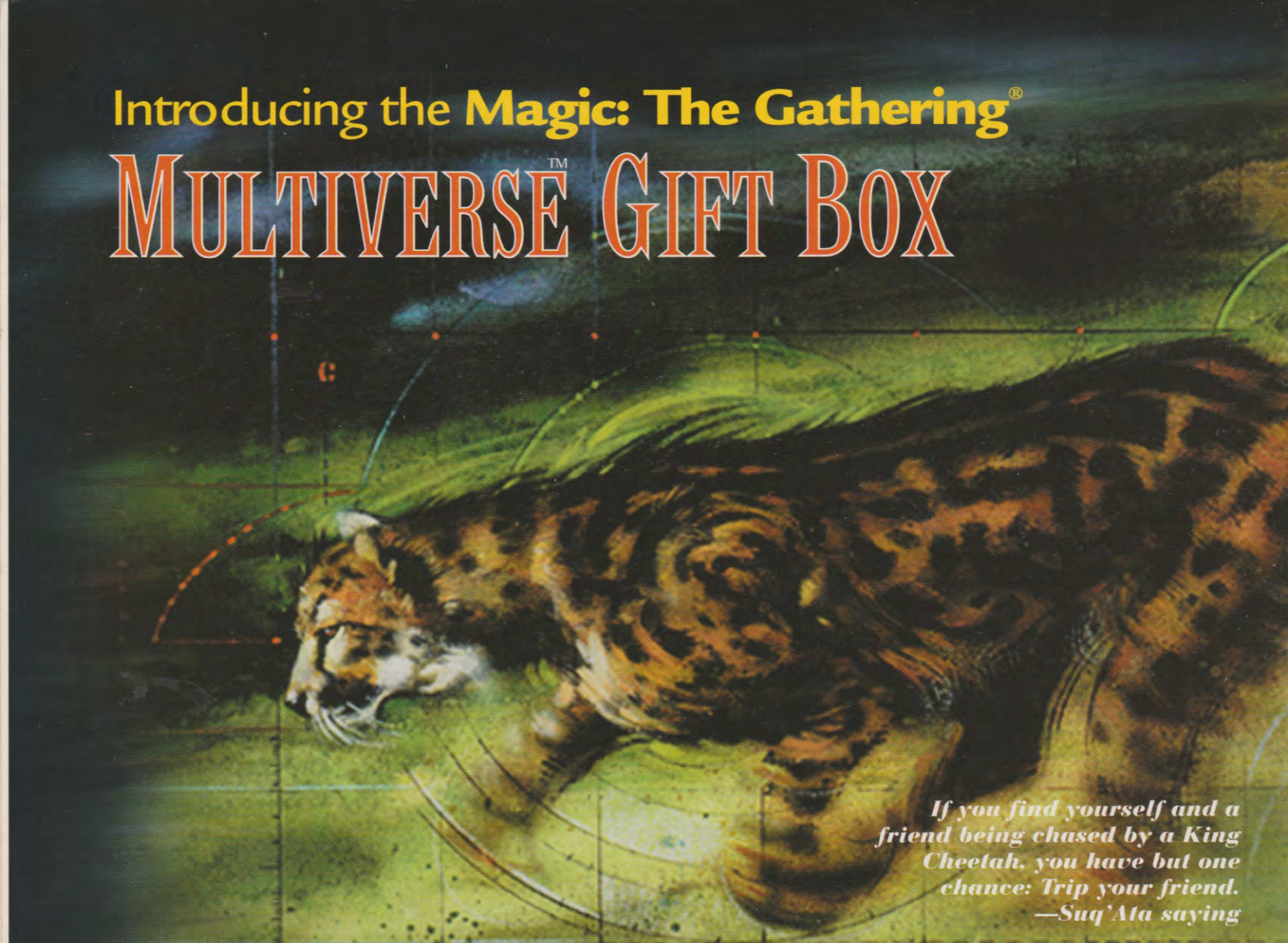

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